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THE ORAL LAW  
AND OTHER SERMONS





# THE ORAL LAW

AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE

REV. M. HYAMSON, B.A., LL.B.

DAYAN OF THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE

LONDON

DAVID NUTT, 57-59 LONG ACRE, W.C.

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TO  
THE MEMORY  
OF MY DEAR PARENTS



## PREFATORY NOTE

ANGLO-JEWISH Homiletic Literature, though considerably increased in recent years, is still not so bulky that the addition of this small volume should prove unwelcome.

The Discourse on the Oral Law, which opens the book and gives it its title, defines the writer's standpoint. As the Oral Law constitutes the life and soul of our religion, it is necessary to uphold and emphasize its authority, at all periods and especially in this age with its disintegrating influences, if Judaism is to be preserved and handed down unimpaired.

The sermons, a few of which have appeared in the Metropolitan Anglo-Jewish Press, fall into two main divisions. Those in the first half deal with the Sabbath and Festivals; those in the second, with the Essentials of the Religious Life—the foundations on which, as the sage tells us, the edifice of Judaism is reared,—*Torah, Avodah, Gemiluth Chassadim*, Study, Worship, Loving-kindness.

I trust that these addresses may attain their purpose, and promote love of God, attachment to His Law, and goodwill to all His creatures.

In conclusion, I tender my thanks to the Chief Rabbi, who kindly read the advance sheets.

M. HYAMSON.

LONDON, Ellul 5670.  
September 1910.

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# THE ORAL LAW AND OTHER SERMONS

## THE ORAL LAW.

CAMBRIDGE, FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 31, 1901.

JUST a week since all Israel was celebrating the most important event in the history of mankind—the Annunciation of the Divine Will on Sinai. Legislator, prophet, psalmist, poet, and sage have vied with each other in doing justice to the grand theme, and have painted in the most vivid and glowing colours the glories of that unique event. It should not, however, be forgotten that the Revelation—hailed though it be by all civilization as the simplest and tersest expression of the larger principles of religion and morality—does not exhaust the whole of Judaism. It is but the basis whereon a mighty superstructure has been reared. The whole duty of the Jew is not completed when he renders homage and obedience to the Ten Words. Hence it is that while the Decalogue formed a part of the ancient Temple Liturgy—being recited every morning before the Shema—attempts made at

various periods to introduce this practice in congregations outside Jerusalem met with strenuous and successful opposition, on the ground that colour might be lent to the pretension that nothing counted or mattered except what was directly revealed by God on Sinai.<sup>1</sup>

I do not propose to speak this evening of the Decalogue, nor even of Holy Writ, which the followers of the Crescent and the Cross revere equally with ourselves. The theme to which I invite your earnest consideration is of specifically Jewish interest. The subject of my discourse may pre-eminently be styled the Heritage of the Congregation of Jacob. To it applies the Psalmist's text, 'He hath not dealt so with any nation : and as for his judgments, they have not known them.'<sup>2</sup> I refer of course to the Oral Law.

There is a passage in the Talmud which may be thus rendered : " And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me on the Mount and stay there ; and I will give unto thee Tables of Stone, the Law and the Commandments which I have written for their instruction." <sup>3</sup> " The Tables of Stone," this phrase refers to the Ten Commandments ; " The Law," that is the Scripture ; " The Mitzvah " means the Mishnah ; " Their Instruction," that is the Gemara. Hence it may be inferred that all these were delivered to Moses on Sinai.' <sup>4</sup>

What a forced comment on a simple text ! What

<sup>1</sup> Berachoth, 12a.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 147 : 20.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 24 : 12.

<sup>4</sup> Berachoth, 5a.

a strange gloss on words in themselves so plain and simple ! In its bald literalness, the Talmudic passage will hardly be accepted as historically accurate. And yet the general purport is transparently clear. Our wise men wished to impress on us the antiquity of the Oral Law and—a fact far more significant—its intimate relation, its close connection, one might almost say its organic unity, with the Scriptures of which it claims to be an authoritative interpretation.

There are many passages of similar tendency. In one of these we read that whatever the prophets prophesied, whatever the sages taught, they learned from Moses. The introductory paragraph in the Ethics of the Fathers is familiar : ‘ Moses received the Law from Sinai, delivered it to Joshua. Joshua handed it down to the Elders ; the Elders to the Prophets ; the Prophets to the men of the Great Assembly.’ The mighty voice heard on Sinai did not cease. It continued to resound and reverberate throughout the centuries. It is thus bad criticism to contrast the so-called legalism of the Pentateuch with the ethical teaching of the Prophets ; for the self-same spirit that breathed in the Master breathed in the Disciples. And the link of connection between the heroes of the Word during the first Temple, and the conservators of Judaism at a later period, between the Seers, on the one hand, and the Scribes, Doctors of the Mishnah and of the Talmud on the other, is constituted by the *Keneseth Haggadolah* that counted among its members the last of the prophets,

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and among its latest representatives Simon the Just.

I do not wish to convey by these remarks that the recognized Judaism of the present day is identical in every detail with the religion of the Prophets or with the Law taught by our first Leader. As with every living organism, so here too, a process of growth and development has taken place. But what, it is submitted, may fairly be claimed, is that the growth and development have been of an evolutionary and not of a revolutionary character. They have been slow and gradual. They have not involved sudden changes or violent breaks from the past.

This too may be urged, that for the beginnings of the Oral Law, for the roots of tradition, we must go back to Mosaic and indeed to pre-Mosaic times. All laws, before they were reduced to writing, were first and for a long time preserved in the living consciousness of the people. Moreover, a *Lex Scripta* involved from the outset a *Lex Non Scripta* in the Jewish, no less than in the Roman and English juridical system. Side by side with the XII Tables and the rigid *Jus Civile*, there grows up the flexible *Jus Honorarium* of the Praetorian Jurisdiction. In this country, too, though the law has to a considerable extent been directly built up by statute legislation, yet the bulk of the English Common Law—not to speak of Equity—consists of customs and usages validated by judicial decisions, and a stream of precedents broadening with the

course of the ages. Of the two sources, judge-made law is certainly not the inferior in importance. Even now, the full scope and limitation of an Act of Parliament are not determined till after a number of pronouncements on its provisions have been made from the Bench.

One might be inclined to question the propriety of the analogy just drawn between law and religion. The objection would have force if the religion discussed consisted of nought but a system of theology, moral principles, and ethical ideals. But Judaism is more than this. It is institutional. Much of it consists of rites and ceremonies. It claims to regulate the whole of our lives : ‘Thy word is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path.’<sup>1</sup> If this function was to be efficiently discharged, an Oral Law must have been, from the start, an inevitable concomitant of the Scriptures. Of the numerous illustrations that might be given of this principle, the following may be cited. In Exodus xxii. 31, we read : ‘And flesh of an animal found in the field, *Terefah*, ye shall not eat.’ As soon as this rule was enacted, questions could not have failed to arise as to the connotation of the term *Terefah* ; as to the character and extent of a lesion which would render the flesh of an animal affected unfit for food. The motive of the rule would need investigation and discussion, in order to arrive at a definition which would clearly determine the class of cases that fell within the scope of this

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119 : 105.

prohibition and those that lay outside it. The traditional definition כל שאין כמוהו חיה טרפה—'Any lesion of a mortal character renders an animal *Terefah*'—seems perfect.

It is sometimes urged that the Oral Law has imposed restrictions never contemplated in the Mosaic legislation. This is true. The principle of safeguarding the Law of God by סינים (fences) is undeniable. On the other hand, it must be remembered that tradition has, in several directions, lightened the burdens of the Scriptural rules and mitigated their rigour. The 'Lex Talionis' is the most familiar example. How frequently do we hear the text quoted, 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,' to prove the more than Draconian severity of the Mosaic dispensation. Yet every Jew should know that, according to the traditional interpretation of the phrase, the highest interests of justice were met by the exaction of monetary compensation for all injuries except where life had been wilfully taken.

The aptest instance of the value of the Oral Law, not merely in explaining the Scriptural enactments but also in rendering their observance practicable, is the institution of the Sabbath. The Bible frequently enjoins us to abstain from work on the day sacred to the Lord. But what constitutes prohibited work?

Much ridicule has been poured upon the heads of the unfortunate Rabbis for the amplitude and minute detail of their regulations concerning the Sabbath. But take the alternative. If we discarded tradition and elected



to walk by the light of the Scripture alone, what would we make of such texts as : ‘ No man shall go forth from his place on the Sabbath day ’ ;<sup>1</sup> or, ‘ Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day.’<sup>2</sup> Would the Sabbath be a delight if we shivered in the cold and groped our way in the dark on the long Friday evenings of the winter season, as the Karaites are reputed to do, so as not to infringe the latter prohibition; or if, like that sect of Scripturalists, we did not stir from our houses the whole of the long summer Sabbath afternoons ?

There is no need to pile proof upon proof. Not one institution of Judaism could be kept, the date of no festival could be fixed, and no rite could be properly observed without the aid of an authoritative tradition supplementary to the Written Law.

If these traditions are of such supreme importance, why are they oral ? Would not much controversy have been saved, had the text been accompanied from the beginning by an adequate written commentary embodying the practice of Judaism ? The answer is simple. General principles of religion and morality which command universal assent as soon as they are formulated, and are accepted as theological and ethical axioms that need no demonstration, can be engraved on tablets of stone. They are true for all time, eternal and unchangeable. But the detailed applications of such principles in laws that regulate all the relations of human life in the family,

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 16 : 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 35 : 3.

society and the state, cannot be equally rigid, or they run the risk of becoming impracticable and impossible. These must be flexible, and retain an adaptability to meet the infinitely complex, kaleidoscopic changes of circumstances that present themselves to each generation as new problems. To preserve this essential quality of flexibility, the practice of Judaism was entrusted to a living tradition. The Oral Law, by its reverence for the past, conjoined with an openness of view, has conferred on Judaism its catholicity, and secured the homogeneity of communities which, differing accidentally in unimportant details, form in regard to the fundamental principles and larger points of practice, 'One People on Earth.'

If any one tells me that he is a follower of the Law of Moses but rejects tradition, I give him credit for the genuineness and sincerity of his professions, but take leave to doubt his readiness to suffer inconveniences and make sacrifices even for that form of Judaism to which he owns allegiance. And the preservation of our faith undoubtedly demands heavy sacrifices. The first of these is devotion of time and mental energy to learn its requirements. Almost at the beginning of the Prayer Book stand two blessings. In the first, we thank God for having sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to occupy ourselves with His Law. In the second, we express gratitude to God for having chosen us from among all peoples and entrusted us with His Law. If we are to merit the privileges expressed in the latter



blessing, we must be able to recite the former without uneasy qualms of conscience because of duty left undone.

An appeal to set apart times and seasons for the study of Judaism may be addressed with especial force to Jewish students at a University. Your stay here proves that you value whatever tends to develop the intellect, refine the mind, and build up character. These ends will be furthered by the study of our sacred literature. Learning not deemed beneath the notice of a Selden or a Milton deserves your keenest interest and closest attention. Many of the congregants here will, it is hoped, help one day, as lay leaders of the community, to mould its policy and shape its destiny. They that pilot the ship should know the charts. Those who would scorn to be blind leaders of the blind, and yet are filled with generous zeal to serve the cause of our race, should seek a first-hand acquaintance with the golden treasury which enshrines the principles and practice of our holy faith ; principles and practice which have been as the very breath of life to our people for centuries and millenniums, and for the preservation of which our noblest men and women have toiled, suffered, ay, gladly laid down their lives. With them may you be able to say : ‘ In Thy statutes I find my delight ; I will not forget Thy words.’<sup>1</sup> With them constantly pray : ‘ Open my eyes that I may see marvellous things in Thy Law.’<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 119 : 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 119 : 18.

## THE SABBATH.

ST. JOHN'S WOOD SYNAGOGUE, OCTOBER 5, 1907.

THE cycle of awe-inspiring days and joyous feasts with which the seventh month is crowded is over ; and on this Sabbath we have resumed the even tenor of our ways by beginning the reading of the Torah in regular sequence. The Sedrah of this morning—how replete it is with charm and interest ! As in a panorama there pass before our mental vision the stages of creation, when the Eternal robed Himself in light as with a garment, stretched forth the Heavens like a curtain, set a bound to the waters, covered the earth with verdure, brought into being living things, and Man, the crown of creation. We have a vivid picture of our first parents in Eden ; ‘ of man’s first disobedience and the fruits of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into the world.’ We are held spellbound by the drama of the first contest, a struggle between brothers which began with jealousy and ended in murder. And the Sedrah concludes with a list of the first ten generations from Adam to Noah and the advanced ages they attained.

These accounts of the childhood of the world and the early annals of the human race have, naturally, given rise to much speculation and discussion. I will, however, pass by, as topics of purely academic interest, the various problems of Geology and Genesis, the apparently conflicting testimony of the rocks and of the Scriptures, the site of Paradise, the various interpretations—literal or allegorical—of the story of the Tree of Knowledge, and the commandment connected with it. I will rather invite your attention to a living problem of paramount and pressing importance that may fitly be discussed, not merely on this, but on every Sabbath in the year. I refer to the Sabbath itself and its observance, to which there is an allusion in this morning's portion, in a passage read every Friday evening in the synagogue and at home: 'And the heaven and earth were finished and all their host, and on the seventh day God had finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it, because He rested thereon from all His work which God had created and made.'<sup>1</sup>

At the close of the six days of creation, the earth was, in its pristine freshness and beauty, like a bride. It was resplendent with the primeval light that shone on throughout the night to the close of the seventh day. And that day was the predestined Sabbath.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2 : 1-3.

It was not to be spent in vacuous idleness. The surcease from secular occupations and interests was to furnish the opportunity for refreshment of the spirit, communion with the Soul of the Universe, the hallowing of human life.

When was the Sabbath first kept by our forefathers? The interpretation of the opening passage in the Sabbath morning Amidah gives the answer. There we read: 'Moses rejoiced in the gift of his portion, for Thou didst call him a faithful servant; a diadem of glory didst Thou place upon his head when he stood before Thee on Mount Sinai. And in his hand he brought down two tables of stone upon which was inscribed the observance of the Sabbath.' The obvious question is: Why should the Lawgiver have especially rejoiced at the inclusion of the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue? Was not the knowledge that he had been chosen God's messenger abundant cause in itself for felicitation? An ancient tradition throws light on the problem. The Midrash describes Moses' profound grief when, arrived at man's estate, he left the palace and looked upon his kinsfolks' misery. But how alleviate it? Was he to demand of Pharaoh the release of the Hebrews? The monarch would have laughed his appeal to scorn. The distance between palace and hut was too wide for mutual understanding and sympathy. The young man's wise head and kind heart evolved a more practical plan. In his audience with Pharaoh he began with congratulations to the king on his living sources of wealth.

‘ These slaves dig your fields, make your bricks, build your treasure-cities.’ The monarch looked gratified. ‘ But,’ continued Moses, after a pause, ‘ what a pity that all this living wealth, all this productive capital, will soon disappear.’ ‘ How so ? ’ asked Pharaoh, somewhat perturbed. ‘ Your Hebrew slaves,’ replied the prince, ‘ labour incessantly from early morn to dewy eve, day by day, week by week, month after month, year in, year out, without pause or intermission. At no distant date they will sink exhausted under their burden of toil.’ ‘ Have you a remedy ? ’ ‘ Certainly. Give the serfs a holiday every seventh day, and you will find that, recuperated by twenty-four hours’ complete repose, they will return to their appointed tasks with renewed vigour, like giants refreshed.’ Pharaoh adopted the counsel. And thus already in Egypt our forefathers kept a weekly day of rest. Later on, when Israel’s Emancipator brought his people to the foot of Sinai to receive the Law of God, what joy filled his soul when he found that the concession his sympathetic heart had gained for his people on the banks of the Nile, had been raised to the dignity of a place in the Decalogue, and had become a central institution of Judaism.

It is indeed impossible to overrate the importance of the Sabbath. Its sanctity takes precedence of duty to parents : ‘ Everyone, revere his father and mother, but My Sabbaths ye shall observe.’<sup>1</sup> The narrative of the erection of a sanctuary to God

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 19 : 3.

that He might dwell in Israel's midst is introduced with the exhortation to labour only six days and keep the seventh day holy to God.<sup>1</sup> Whoever violates the Day of Atonement is left to the judgment of Heaven. But the profanation of the Sabbath entails the extreme penalty of the law.<sup>2</sup> Nehemiah, cup-bearer to Persia's king, and, on the exiles' return, governor of Jerusalem, notes that he closed the gates of the city on Friday afternoons to check trading on the Sabbath.<sup>3</sup>

After Biblical times, what an important part the Day of Rest has played throughout the Middle Ages down to our own days in preserving Israel's courage, hopefulness, and self-respect. The weary and footsore traveller, arrived home on Friday, flings down the pack that bent his back, and at the same time emerges from the slough of despond and casts off the burden of anxieties which have worn furrows in his face. He dons festival attire and wends his way to the House of God to greet the Bride. Then he returns home—no longer a humble dwelling, but a palace glorious with light. The modest repast a rich banquet; the churl, emancipated, a king among men. Who, with fairy's magic wand, has wrought the marvellous transformation? Who other than gracious Queen Sabbath? She it is who has filled his dwelling with light and his heart with joy, conferred upon him a broad outlook upon life, a calm and just perception of the harmony of the universe and an appreciation of man's place in it.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 35 : 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Nehem. 13 : 15-22.



She has given the humble toiler a foretaste of Heaven upon earth. Two angels, according to the Talmudic legend,—one benevolent, the other malevolent—accompany the Israelite home on Friday evening. If they find the dwelling prepared for the Sabbath, lights kindled, tables decked, the good angel pronounces the blessing: ‘May it be so here next Friday evening.’ And his fellow-spirit confirms the benediction, albeit grudgingly, with an Amen! But where all is dark and gloomy, where Friday night is not different from other nights, the evil angel sneers: ‘So will it be next Friday evening,’ and the good angel sadly acquiesces Amen! The legend, in its garb of Oriental imagery, embodies a psychological truth. No human effort is devoid of consequence. Every act facilitates its repetition. Frequent repetition engenders a habit which becomes part of our innermost self, warp and woof of our soul’s very fabric. Just as the stone cast into a pond produces ever-widening ripples, so our influence for good or evil radiates in every direction; our deeds make or mar not only our own lives, but also those of children, relatives, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. Where the Sabbath is sacred to the Lord and Friday evening is honoured and revered, where parents by their example foster their children’s spiritual growth, they can confidently cherish the hope: ‘So will it be next Friday night and many Friday nights.’ After they have gone to their eternal Sabbath, their memory will be fragrant, their influence will continue to be felt, for the

traditional observances which they practised will be lovingly perpetuated by their descendants. But where the beautiful Friday night home service has been permitted to fall into abeyance, it may be predicted with certainty that as it is this Friday evening so will it be next Friday evening. There is indeed reason to fear, that in the third generation, at the furthest, another branch will have fallen from the ancestral tree, another family be lost to the House of Israel. And evil example is contagious, and spreads from class to class. Thirty and forty years ago, London Jewry enjoyed the respect of the Gentile community for an almost uniform observance of the Sabbath. And now——? Mr. Evans, the Factory Inspector, recently testified before a Labour Commission that a seven-days working week was not uncommon among a section of the Jewish tailors in Soho. The statement needs qualification. Work in that quarter is neither so plentiful nor so regular as frequently to necessitate seven days' work in the week. But the statement could not have been made had the Sabbath been scrupulously observed. Again, while formerly Jewish firms took co-religionists into service, to the mutual advantage of employer and employés, conforming Jews now have the utmost difficulty in obtaining positions for their children, where they can earn a livelihood without violating their religion. Some heads of firms, realizing the terrible anomaly of Jews insisting on desecration of the Sabbath as a *sine quâ non* condition of employment,



cut the Gordian knot by altogether refusing to take Jewish lads.

The pity is that this violation of a most sacred institution seems so needless. Saturday afternoon is already a recognized half-holiday. The increasing tendency to spend the week-end away from London reduces trade during the few morning hours to a minimum. A combined effort on the part of the decadents to recover the old-fashioned Sabbath, with its precious influence, is worth making and might be blessed with success. A few years ago it was suggested that Sabbath rest should form a plank in the platform of Jewish trade-unions. But in order that a movement in this direction might have a chance of winning, the impulse must come from above. The middle classes must set the example. I am confident that those here present do not stand in need of these exhortations. I trust, however, that my words may travel beyond the walls of this sacred edifice and reach the hearts and consciences of all who now unfortunately feel themselves compelled to break the Fourth Commandment, so that they too may endeavour to earn the blessing of the Prince of Prophets: 'If thou wilt turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Is. 58 : 13-14.

## THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, - ROSH HASHANAH, 5662.

‘The nobles of the peoples are gathered together; even the people of the God of Abraham; for unto God belong the shields of the earth; He is greatly exalted.’<sup>1</sup>

How appropriate to the day is this text, and indeed the whole psalm from which it is taken, which we shall recite to-morrow, before the sounding of the Shofar. On this feast, Israel—the noblest of nations—is gathered together in his tens, hundreds, thousands, in humble rooms and magnificent temples, to acclaim God as the Sovereign of the Universe, to declare that ‘to Him belong the shields of the earth, and that He is greatly exalted.’ To-day is the Anniversary of Creation, a feast of joy. But the joy is mingled with anxiety and terror, for ‘God sitteth on His holy throne.’<sup>2</sup> The fate of nations and individuals, principalities and powers, trembles in the balance. In the homely but touching simile of this morning’s liturgy: ‘Even as a shepherd counts his flock, causing the lambs to pass one by one under his staff, so on this day, God visits and numbers and marks all His living creatures; decides the destiny of each; determines who is to

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 47 : 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 47 : 8.

live and who to die ; who is to languish on the couch of suffering, and who is to enjoy the inestimable boon of health ; who is to endure anxiety, and who be blessed with freedom from care ; who is to be enriched, and who impoverished ; who aggrandized, and who abased.'

We read in the Talmud<sup>1</sup> that when Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai was on his deathbed, the disciples assembled around him noted his deep dejection, and marvelled exceedingly. 'O Light of Israel, firm and upright Pillar, mighty Hammer, wherefore dost thou weep ?' And the master replied : 'If I were summoned before an earthly tribunal, would I not have cause for alarm ? And yet, at the worst, were I even condemned, what can man do unto me ? The judge might order me to be imprisoned ; but my durance would not last beyond the brief span of my earthly pilgrimage. He might sentence me to be punished with stripes ; but torture, too, has its limits. When pain passes a definite point, blessed unconsciousness supervenes. He could adjudge me to be put to death. My body would then be reduced to dust and ashes, but the nobler part, the immortal soul, would burst its bonds and wing its way to realms of light and bliss eternal. And yet would not alarm be natural under such circumstances ? How much more so, when I am about to appear before the Supreme Judge, the King of Kings, Whose power over me is infinite and everlasting, and from Whose hand I cannot escape.'

<sup>1</sup> Berachoth, 28b.

If a sage, scholar, and saint like Rabbi Jochanan, the saviour of Judaism after the destruction of the second Temple, whose whole life was devoted to the promotion of religion and morality, to the service of God and mankind, felt so absolutely unprepared to meet his Maker, what shall we say, conscious as we are of our manifold frailties and imperfections, confess as we must that our lives are, for the most part, heedless and careless, wilful, wayward and self-centred? In the words of the ancient saying: 'If the conflagration has enveloped the cedars, will not the tongues of flame lick the hyssop that grows in the crevices of the wall? The leviathan of the deep has been caught on the harpooner's hook. The minnows that sport in the mire of the sands on the seashore—can they escape their doom?'<sup>1</sup>

This aspect of the New Year and the sentiments to which it gives rise find expression in the following passage from the Midrash: 'Wherefore,' asked the ministering angels, 'does not Israel chant the Hallel on the New Year, as on other feasts and new moons?' And the Holy One replied: 'The King sits on the throne of judgment; the books of life and death are open before Him. Is this a meet season for singing jooyus songs?'

But there is another side to this day. The New Year is not only the Day of Judgment, the beginning of the awe-inspiring season. It is also a feast.

<sup>1</sup> Möed Katon, 25b.

Nehemiah bids the returned exiles who worshipped in the Temple at Jerusalem, not be disquieted nor grieve, 'for to-day is holy to our God.'<sup>1</sup> Paradoxical though it may seem, the very thought that this day has been set apart for judgment, should fill our souls with joy; for it is a mark, not of God's anger, but of His infinite love. For, consider, does the Eternal Whose glance sweeps the whole universe in a single instant of time, Who searches the reins and innermost recesses of our hearts—does He need a special season for judging His creatures? Does He require to summon witnesses, sift evidence, and clear up issues? If, nevertheless, He has appointed an annual Day of Judgment, it is for our sake, not for His. Our Heavenly Father does not desire that His children should stagger beneath the load of sin, the burden of guilt, which, as time rolls on, increases in weight, till at last it threatens to crush us. While we are still on the brink, before it is too late, His loving hand would snatch us from the abyss, place us on safe, firm ground, and set us on the path that leads upward. And therefore has this period been appointed for introspection and retrospection, for looking into our hearts, scrutinizing our past, for quiet meditation, earnest reflection, searching self-examination. 'Sound the Shofar on the new moon at the beginning of the month, on our feast; for the Judgment of the God of Jacob is an ordinance for Israel,'<sup>2</sup> i.e. for Israel's good.

<sup>1</sup> Nehem. 8 : 10.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 81 : 3-4.

Will we be wise and consider? Will we take the hand that is lovingly extended to us, and utilize the opportunity presented by this season of grace for repentance and return? Will we indeed institute a searching self-examination?

The task to which we are invited is far from pleasant or flattering to our vanity. Memory will recall many a word that should have remained unspoken, many a deed that we would wish undone. And these recollections will, like accusing spectres, gibingly point the finger of scorn at us, and mockingly ask: 'Do you really believe that this season can effect the miracle of a radical change in your character? Can you burst the bond of sin and break the fetters of iniquity? Can you change evil habits that have become a second nature, part of your very selves?' And we put the suggestions of the Adversary behind us and humbly make reply: 'Conscious are we of our weakness, but strong in our reliance on God's mercy. Though our good deeds be few, and our misdeeds numerous as the hairs of our heads, though our merits be light as air, and our failings heavy as the sand on the seashore, yet, out of the boundless treasury of infinite love reserved for the unworthy, our Heavenly Father will take the attributes of mercy and forgiveness, place them in the scale, and redress the balance in our favour.'

But only on certain conditions will He do this,—that we make the first move, and take the first step; that we do not deceive ourselves, nor extenuate our faults.



Our repentance must be sincere. The test of this sincerity and its reward are indicated in the prophets' exhortations : ' Let the wicked abandon his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and return to God, and He will have mercy upon him ; to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.'<sup>1</sup> ' Who is like unto Thee, O God, Who forgiveth iniquity, and pardoneth transgression, doth not keep His anger for ever, for He delighteth in loving kindness. He will again have compassion upon us, suppress our iniquity, cast our sins into the depths of the sea, so that they be not remembered nor recalled, nor brought up against us for ever.'<sup>2</sup>

Almighty Father, send down Thy richest heavenly blessings upon Thy children, who are here assembled to usher in the New Year with joy ; joy mingled with awe. Grant that this year may be a year of peace, plenty and prosperity to us, all Israel, and all mankind. Sustain us with Thy open, holy, liberal hand, that we may not stand in need of the gifts of flesh and blood, nor of their loans. Let thy gracious influence rest upon our work, so that whatever we undertake may be begun in Thy name and completed to Thy glory. Bless the august ruler of this realm. Endow his ministers with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, insight and foresight, counsel and might, strength of will and firmness of purpose, to further the best interests of the Empire.

<sup>1</sup> Is. 55 : 7.

<sup>2</sup> Micah 7 : 18-19.

Speedily put an end to the war of class against class, the strife of factions, the jealousies of parties, the antagonism of sects, the enmities of nations. May all mankind form one band, one brotherhood, to serve Thee in sincerity and truth. Let all acknowledge Thee Sovereign of the Universe, and proclaim that to the God of Jacob belong the shields of the earth, and that He is indeed exalted. Amen.



## THE POISON OF ASPS.

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE, SABBATH OF REPENTANCE, 1908.

ONCE upon a time, it is related in the Midrash,<sup>1</sup> a peripatetic vendor of drugs cried out in the villages near Sepphoris, 'Who wants the elixir of life? Who seeks the elixir of life?' Presently a large crowd gathered about him, eager to secure the marvellous potion that promised perpetual youth. The merchant drew forth from his bosom a tiny but precious volume, the collection of Songs and Supplications that bears the name of Jesse's son; opened it at the 34th Psalm, and recited the verses: 'Who is the man who desireth life, loveth days to see happiness? Guard thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.'<sup>2</sup>

[2] My brethren, human creatures—our co-religionists not excepted—are proverbially impatient of reproof. When a sage in Israel exclaimed: 'I wonder whether this generation possesses anyone gifted with the capacity for exhortation,' another countered with the

<sup>1</sup> Lev. Rabba, *Parshath Metzora*.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 34 : 13-15.

question : ' I wonder if anyone at the present day will accept rebuke. Tell a man to remove a splinter from between his teeth, and he will retort straightway, " Remove the beam from between thine eyes." ' <sup>1</sup> Hence, those, it was said, are popular who refrain from fault-finding. There are, however, seasons when the duty of plain speaking cannot, with a clear conscience, be evaded. Such a time is the present. For the past month, the Shofar has called the most listless and heedless to earnest reflection. This morning's lesson from the Prophets begins : ' Return, O Israel, to thy God, for thou hast stumbled through thy iniquities.' <sup>2</sup> On the holiest day of the year, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, the Feast of Reconciliation, which will be celebrated in another seven days, we shall hear the monition of the prince of prophets : ' Cry aloud and spare not : lift up thy voice like a trumpet and declare to my people their transgression, to the House of Jacob their sins.' <sup>3</sup>

Where begin ? General exhortations are ineffective. Hearers take them as little to heart as they do the alphabetical confessions, which are repeated so glibly and applied by so few to their own individual lives. Again, to descend from the general to the particular would be impracticable in a short space of time. For, even as men differ in physical conformation, in lineaments of features, so they vary infinitely in cast of mind, character and disposition, in circumstances and environments, in their opportunities for good and

<sup>1</sup> Erachin, 16b.

<sup>2</sup> Hosea 14 : 1.

<sup>3</sup> Is. 58 : 1.

evil, in the temptations which they resist or to which they fall victims.

One class of faults, however, is so comprehensive, is the root of such dire mischief, inflicts so much misery on individuals and families, sometimes even wrecks and ruins entire communities, and, alas, is so general and widespread that, by directing attention to it on the Sabbath of Penitence, the preacher cannot fail to hit the mark, and so fulfil the purpose of the day. These faults may be summarised in one phrase: The abuse of the tongue.

What a wondrous gift is speech, the distinguishing mark of Divine favour that makes man pre-eminent over the brute creation! לנפש חיה in the text, 'Man became a living soul,'<sup>1</sup> is rendered by the Targum, לרוח ממללא, 'a spirit gifted with speech.' Eve was thus called because she was the mother of all that *speak*. Progress and civilization are due to this faculty, without which ordered thought would be impossible. Without capacity for giving articulate expression to complex sensations, emotions and thoughts, human communication is inconceivable. And by spoken language and its written symbols, knowledge is transmitted, so that children begin where their fathers left off. One generation tells the tale to another, and on the sure foundation of the accumulated experiences of the past, new and yet newer storeys are successively added to the magnificent temple of science.

Marvellous as is this noble endowment, to what

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2:7.

base uses is it not too frequently degraded! How ignoble is its service when men waste the fleeting hours in idle, frivolous, hare-brained chatter! And this too is venial compared with the scandal-mongering, tale-bearing, and deliberate falsehood, in which some indulge. These pernicious practices are not limited to any class. Mischiefs that proceed from the abuse of the tongue are rampant among poor and rich, high and low, distinguished and obscure. At the tea-table, how frequently is the beverage flavoured with a dish of more or less mild, more or less spicy, scandal. And the disparaging story, as it passes from one to another, is rolled in the mouth with intense gusto, as if it were a dainty tit-bit or toothsome morsel. Individuals with pretensions to culture deem it no offence against good taste and morals to whisper insinuations against the absent, with whom they have broken bread, little recking that the poisoned arrow of slander, lightly shot forth, slays at a distance, and the live coal of calumny, dropped with studied carelessness, can reduce a town to ashes. No need to quote many passages from Holy Writ and Rabbinic lore in condemnation of these vile practices. David, that sufferer from detraction, brands certain types in terms of biting irony: 'Their inward parts are destruction; a yawning grave is their throat; their tongues are slippery.'<sup>1</sup> Woe to any reputation discussed by such persons. No character once in their mouths can hope for rehabilitation. Again, he says: 'Who speaks

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 5 : 10.

evil secretly of his neighbour, him will I cut off.'<sup>1</sup> And yet again : ' God will cut off the smooth lips.'<sup>2</sup> I shall refrain from repeating his terrible imprecations on the evil tongue. I will rather deal with the theme on a pleasanter side. The 15th Psalm draws the picture of a good man. It begins : ' O Lord, who will sojourn in Thy tent, who will abide on Thy holy mountain ? ' As Judah Muscato paraphrases it :<sup>3</sup> ' How shall a man comport himself that he may win happiness on earth,—God's tent—and bliss in Heaven—His Holy Mount ? ' The reply is first given in general terms : ' He who walks uprightly ' ; that is, fulfils his duty to God, with Whom we are enjoined to be upright ; ' does justice,' which sums up duty to one's neighbour ; ' and speaks truth in his heart,' which comprehends duty to self. The Psalmist then gives detailed illustrations of these general headings. And what does he first say concerning the good man ? ' *He has not borne tales on his tongue.*' Note that tale-bearing is prohibited even if the tale be true. Truth is no justification for slander, if the public interest is not served by publication. The modicum of truth makes tale-bearing more dangerous than the dissemination of downright, unmitigated falsehood. For it is just this element of truth that serves as the handle which drives the lie home, to the undoing of honourable reputations.

My friends, if slander and tale-bearing are sufficiently heinous, how much more reprehensible is the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 101 : 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 12 : 4.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Nefutzoth Jehudah*, Discourse 11.

encouragement of these offences. The receiver is worse than the thief, for his den is a training-school for thieves. And the evil tongue would soon cease to distil venom if there were no ears greedy to receive the poison. Calumny would be silenced if it were checked by the frown of honest indignation. Of equal importance with the prohibition, 'Thou shalt not go about as a tale-bearer among thy people,'<sup>1</sup> is the injunction, 'Thou shalt not receive an evil report.'<sup>2</sup>

Slander slays three persons—the slandered, the slanderer, and the listener. Saul is the classic instance. Doeg the Edomite carries the tale to Saul that Ahimelech had succoured David, given him and his men the show-bread, entrusted him with Goliath's sword. The tale is true. The immediate consequence of its recital is the massacre of eighty-four priests of Nob. The tale-bearer, according to tradition, meets with a violent death. The king does not escape. On the eve of the battle of Gilboa, Saul inquires of the Lord. But the oracles are silent. The Urim and Tummim give no reply. And after the disastrous defeat, Saul implores his armour-bearer: 'Stand up and slay me, for the terror—*Hashavatz*—has seized me.' *Hashavatz* is connected by the Aggadah with the Hebrew term for the gold-embroidered robes of the priests. The bitterness of defeat was intensified by agonizing remorse. The phantoms of the murdered priests of Nob, the anointed of the Lord, reproach the king, anointed of the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 19 : 16.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 23 : 1.



And the original cause of the mischief was the readiness to receive calumny.

How shall we avoid these faults? How restrain the active organ, which is so unruly despite ivory bars and coral gates. A vow of perpetual silence is the Trappist device. But that would be to slay a noble faculty given for use, enjoyment, and improvement. To flee from intercourse with one's fellows would mean to escape one danger, only to fall into a worse peril. The anchorite in the desert, the solitary in the cell, have their peculiar temptations. The fiends of evil imagination enter the empty chambers of the mind and run riot there. Man is a social creature, sent here not to save his own soul only, but to improve his kind.

One prophylactic exists against abuse of speech. Fill your hearts with love of God and reverence for His holy name. Exercise your lips and tongues in the recital of His sacred words; always endeavour to carry out His will. For Satan only finds mischief for idle hands, vacant minds, empty hearts and lives. Do you 'desire life, do you love days to see happiness?' Not only guard tongues and lips from guile. Not only turn from evil, but be active in well-doing. So will you seek peace and pursue it, peace with your consciences, peace with your fellow-beings, peace with your Heavenly Father, the Lord of Peace.

## ‘SET THY HOUSE IN ORDER.’

GREAT SYNAGOGUE, SEPTEMBER 14, 1904.

A SPEAKER recently made use, on a public platform, of the well-known line, ‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.’ Turning to the chair he added: ‘Of course, the noble chairman knows whence this quotation comes.’ But the peer smiled sweetly and shook his head in disclaimer. The speaker then addressed the same inquiry to friends on the right and the left, the one a bishop, the other a judge. But the man learned in the law as well as the scholar in divinity mutely disclaimed knowledge of the source of the familiar sentence. Then some one in the audience shouted out: ‘It’s in the Bible.’ That was wrong, for the line is from John Keats. The error, however, was excusable, for the sacred Scriptures are studded on every page with exquisite gems of thought set in perfect phrase, with sentences replete with wisdom, that have imprinted themselves on the minds and hearts of millions, and become part of the treasury of our common English tongue.

Tempting though the theme be, it is not germane to the subject of my discourse to expatiate on the



influence which the Bible has exercised on the language of the people. I propose, however, to take one of these popular phrases as my text.

How often and in what various connections do we not hear the exhortation, ‘Put your house in order’? Private individuals, municipalities, high officers of state are frequently enjoined to put their houses in order. Whence comes the phrase? It is found in two places in the Bible: in the Second Book of Kings xx. 1, and in the parallel passage, Isaiah xxxviii. 1. By whom and to whom was it uttered, and on what occasion? The context furnishes the reply. Hezekiah was stretched on the couch of sickness. By the command of God, the prophet Isaiah visited him and said: ‘Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.’ ‘Set thy house in order,’ that is, settle thy affairs, make thy last will and testament, for thy last hour is nigh. Does Hezekiah follow this counsel? No. In the words of our wise men, he bids the prophet begone with his dark and gloomy vaticinations. ‘Thus have I received the tradition from my ancestor, King David, that even when the sword’s sharp edge is at a man’s throat, he should not abandon hope or give way to despair.’<sup>1</sup> David had been in many a sore plight and dire strait. He had prayed to God and God had helped him. ‘That example I shall follow,’ said Hezekiah. He turns his face to the wall, and with bitter tears pours out his heart in supplication to God. And again he receives a message that God

<sup>1</sup> Berachoth, 10a.

has seen his tears, heard his cries, answered his prayers, and years would be added to his life.

Hezekiah is praised by the sacred historian as an exemplary king who purged Judæa of its idolatry, restored the worship of the true God, and was especially zealous for religious education, so that it was said, that in his days, from Dan to Beersheba, none could be found unlearned in the Law.<sup>1</sup> Still, good man though Hezekiah undoubtedly was, and weighty as were the services he rendered to Israel and Israel's faith, he was but a human being with a human being's limitations and imperfections. Of six innovations only three were approved.<sup>2</sup> Even in the prayer he utters on his sick-bed, he is unduly conscious of his merits: 'See how I have walked before Thee in sincerity and truth, and have done that which is right in Thine eyes.' He recovers. Messengers come, bringing congratulations from Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon, and vanity induces him to show the strangers all the treasures of the House of the Lord. When Isaiah points out to the king that this foolish ostentation must provoke the visitors' cupidity and that Jerusalem would ultimately fall a prey to the Chaldean's lust for conquest and plunder, Hezekiah weakly asks, 'Will there be peace in my days?' and, on receiving an affirmative reply, is resigned. The verdict on Hezekiah will be that he was a good man who rendered great services to his people, but that, at the same time, he committed serious mistakes, and that his character was marred by grave defects.

<sup>1</sup> Sanhedrin, 94b.

<sup>2</sup> Pesachim, 56a.

Whether the first part of this criticism applies to us or not, certainly the second does. Our lives resemble the life of the king of Judah by reason of the errors innumerable we commit and the flaws that mar our characters. To us as to the king comes the prophet's message: ‘Set thy house in order.’ The monition should appeal with special force at this season; a solemn, awe-inspiring season, which is, at the same time, a season of grace.

On the New Year three books are open before the tribunal of the august Judge.<sup>1</sup> In the first are inscribed the names of the Tsaddikim, the righteous; in the second are written the names of the reprobates. But the third volume is the bulkiest, for it contains the list of those who belong to neither of the above categories, who are neither white as the driven snow nor black as the raven. The judgment of these last is deferred. Their fate is in suspense. Time and respite are afforded them to set their houses in order. And if they avail themselves, before the advent of the Day of Atonement, of the opportunity and repent, they too are inscribed with the righteous in the Book of Life.

To this intermediate class, brethren, do not the preponderating majority belong? We dare not write ourselves down reprobates, beyond the hope of redemption. But we are not so foolish as to call ourselves saints. ‘Come to Heshbon.’ Let us for a moment consider our modes of life. Assume that the worshippers in this synagogue are strict observers of the Sabbath and hold the feasts of the Lord in

<sup>1</sup> Rosh Hashanah, 16b.

reverence and honour, and that with Ezekiel they can say that forbidden food has never passed their lips.<sup>1</sup> But do these exhaust all the virtues and sum up all the duties of an Israelite? What of our relations to our fellow-men? Does the tradesman deal with strict honesty, never taking advantage of his customers' ignorance, never betraying or abusing the confidence reposed in his integrity? Does the workman never scamp his work? Does the master always remember that his employés are not machines but living beings, not mere 'hands' but fellow-creatures for whose well-being he is responsible to them and to God Almighty? In the keen race of life, does each one keep strictly to the straight and narrow path marked out for him? Do we never unfairly trip up our competitors, forgetting that the prize, gained unworthily, is itself worthless? And in the social sphere, do we always humbly strive to realize the prayers uttered thrice daily: 'O, my God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile'? Do we fasten a bridle on our tongue and a lock on our lips, so that no word of slander, detraction, or disparagement shall escape them; no malicious, thoughtless expression that shall prejudice our neighbour's material interests or bring the blush of shame to his cheek? And if we are so exceptionally fortunate, if our circumstances are so easy and our temperament is so placid, that we can lay the flattering unction to our soul, that we are free from these faults, do we not suffer from spiritual conceit, an overweening sense

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 4: 14.

of our own righteousness? Do we not, like Hezekiah, say: ‘See, Lord, how I have walked before Thee in sincerity and truth, and have done what is right in Thine eyes’? And this spiritual pride that apes humility—is it not a dangerous, because an insidious peril? How can we improve if we are unconscious of the need of improvement, if we are blind to our faults, have an exaggerated opinion of our merits, and regard ourselves as paragons of all the virtues? ‘Lo, I will judge thee because thou sayest, I have not sinned.’<sup>1</sup> Let us, at this solemn season, set our houses in order, critically and impartially scrutinize our conduct and dispositions, correct and eradicate defects of temperament, resolve in the future to avoid the mistakes of the past. And honest effort at amendment and improvement will, by the Divine Blessing, be crowned with success.

‘Set thy *house* in order.’ Look to the ways of your households. You are responsible not for yourselves only, but for the children God has entrusted to you, your successors and future representatives, the bearers of your names who, when you are no longer here, will, by their lives, cover your memories with praise or blame.

The Chinese have the custom that if one has deserved well of his country, his ancestors are ennobled. A parallel to this idea is the saying: **ברא מזכה אבא**. Terah the image-maker is saved from

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 2:35.



Gehennah by his son Abraham, the breaker of images. See to it that your children's lives shall secure you an immortality of bliss hereafter. Shield the eyes and ears of your innocent offspring from polluting sights and sounds that corrupt the mind and heart and lead to ruin. Surround them in early youth with a pure, religious, truly Jewish atmosphere. Accustom them to communal worship, train them to look upon the synagogue as their home, and to regard the home as a sanctuary. For remember that the home is the centre of Judaism. Train them so that the love of God may become a part of their innermost selves, and the observance of His commands a delight to them, an unconscious habit, a second nature.

Though you try your hardest, you will perhaps not realize your expectations. Hezekiah's son was a Manasseh. But as Isaiah said, 'Into these mysteries of the future, wherefore seek to penetrate. Do your part. Leave the result to God.'<sup>1</sup>

Our duty begins with ourselves and extends to those dependent upon us, but does not end with them. The High Priest made atonement not only for himself, for his family, for his tribe, but also for the whole House of Israel. Each of us is responsible for all. Let us put our house—our communal house—in order; examine its defects, and repair the breaches in its walls before they come toppling about our ears. 'Surely,' you may say, 'this is the duty of the community.'

<sup>1</sup> Berachoth, 10a.

Yes. But you are the community. For you are the units of which the community consists. ‘Do we not pay our dues and give donations to synagogues and charitable organizations?’ And I ask in turn: ‘Can you discharge all your obligations with a money payment? God requires not the service of your purses, but personal services, not merely gold and silver, but yourselves.’ ‘We can do so little. We have so little influence. Our time is limited.’ No heavier burden, my friends, will be placed on your shoulders than they can bear. No one expects any individual to complete singly the regeneration of Israel. But help to bear the burden. Do your best to set in order the House of Israel, and your efforts will not be in vain. May the New Year be to you, to the whole community, and to the whole House of Israel, a year of peace and prosperity, blessing and happiness. To you, your families, and all Israel may the glad message come as it came to Hezekiah: ‘You shall not die, but live.’

## ‘ LIFE.’

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, DAY OF ATONEMENT, 1901.

ON this, the holiest day of the year, we fervently beseech heaven for the gift of Life. And, indeed, during the last ten days, we have, in our prayers, after the beginning of the Amidah, added the formula : ‘ Remember us unto life, O King Who delightest in life ; and inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Thy sake, O God of Life.’

Life is indeed a most precious boon. As King Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, ‘ Sweet is the light, and pleasant is it to the eyes to see the sun.’<sup>1</sup> Exhilarating it is to draw deep draughts of the sweet, fresh breath of heaven ; feel the breezes fan our cheeks, and fill our lungs, causing the crimson stream to course freely through our veins, vitalizing and invigorating the entire frame. At such moments of exuberance we are conscious that our very existence is a tribute to the wisdom, goodness, and power of the Beneficent and Omnipotent Creator and Ruler. At such times ‘ All our bones declare, O Lord, Who is like unto Thee.’

But alas ! man is not, like the angels, immortal.

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. 11 : 7.



He does not endure for ages, like the spheres that revolve in space. A creature of the dust, he is subject to the law of change, growth and decay. The rosy spring morn of youth, when the world presents so fair an exterior, passes away all too soon, and is succeeded by the noon of middle age. The hot and fierce summer sun beats upon our heads. The fret and fever of the struggle for existence, with its inevitable checks, set-backs, and disappointments, and sometimes even failures and disasters, embitter us and make us say with the prophet of this afternoon's lesson, ‘Better for me to die than to live.’<sup>1</sup> This period of crisis also passes. The autumnal afternoon succeeds with its gold and brown and russet; with its red and yellow leaf—signs of decay. The stalwart guards of the human tabernacle—the arms, brawny and strong in the vigour of manhood, become limp and feeble, and drop listlessly to the sides. The pillars on which the tabernacle rests begin to tremble, totter, and deny their office. The sentinels of the soul, the senses, so keen and alert at an earlier period, become dim and dull and drowsy. Kindly nature gives gentle warnings of the approach of the winter's evening. And then the night descends. ‘The wheel of life stops, the pitcher and the cistern are shattered. The windows are darkened, the mourners go about in the streets, for man is gone to his home; the dust is restored to mother earth and the spirit returns to God Who gave it.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jonah 4: 3.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. 12: 3-7.

These are the four seasons of human life ; this is the history of the rise, progress, decline, and fall of the earthly career of every human being to whom the natural, and what should be the normal, term is allotted. But how many are cut off in the prime of life ? How many are snatched away in the flush of youth, before promise has become fulfilment ? How many young plants are plucked by the Great Gardener, and transplanted ere the buds and blossoms have opened and unfolded their petals ? Truly, none of us has a covenant with the Great Lord of Life for a definite portion of earthly existence. If, then, life is so precious a boon and so uncertain in its duration, ought we not to value it while we have it ? Should we squander or abuse it ? Ought we not rather to make the fullest use of it and employ it to the best advantage ?

Human experiences repeat themselves, even as do natural phenomena ; but time, once gone, never returns. The clouds greedily drink the mists on the surface of the ocean, and discharge their precious burden on the mountain-tops and summits of hills. The water, apparently lost in the earth, emerges in the form of springs, rills, brooks, and rivulets. These join together, gather force and volume, form noble streams and mighty rivers that again find their way to the sea. And the process is repeated an indefinite number of times. But yesterday never returns. An hour wasted is like a cup of costly wine spilt on the ground, not to be gathered up.

There is a legend that a shipwrecked sailor was

washed ashore on an island, which he thought deserted. But he was mistaken. To his agreeable surprise, the inhabitants trooped down to the shore, greeted him with every mark of respect, escorted him with pomp to a magnificent palace, robed him in royal purple, seated him on a gorgeous throne, set before him a banquet fit for a king, and regaled his ears with sweetest music. The simple sailor accepted it all without question. Days glided into weeks, weeks passed into months. An entire year elapsed. And then those who had crowned him uncrowned him. Those who had set him on the throne deposed him; stripped him of his royal robes, drove him forth from the palace with contumely, thrust him into the frail craft from which he had landed, and sent it adrift on the raging waters. Such was the fate of many a voyager. One, wiser than the rest, unconscious of any merits entitling him to kingship, asked his courtiers to tell him, at least, how long his rule would last. And when he heard that his authority would not extend beyond a twelvemonth, he bethought him that his kingly office involved duties as well as rights, responsibilities as well as privileges. He spent his term in governing his kingdom wisely and prudently. And when the year was over, he too, like his predecessors, had to leave. But his subjects did not drive him forth with scorn. The air was rent with lamentations at the inevitable parting. And long after he had gone, his former subjects remembered him with deep gratitude. The legend is a parable fraught with

meaning. Its application is surely not difficult. This earth, on which we, strangers sailing the ocean of eternity, land—is it not a veritable isle of the blest, a palace of magnificence, an Eden of bliss? On arrival, loving arms receive us, a wealth of affection is showered upon us. Kings are we, and our parents are our willing subjects. When we grow to the stature of men, the world lies at our feet; the future is all before us. ‘Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with honour and dignity; everything hast Thou placed beneath his feet.’<sup>1</sup> But our kingship is limited to a span. How all-important is it, then, that we should so use this all too brief period that the world should be better for our having lived in it; how necessary that while we are here we should prepare and provide for the long journey that is inevitable and cannot be put off. When our last hour comes, gold, silver, pearls and precious stones must be left behind. Relatives and friends follow, indeed, him who has gone before, but only to the grave, and no further. What will accompany us in our journey through the dark valley of the shadow is the consciousness of lives well spent, devoted to the service of God and humanity.

On the first day of the New Year I quoted the farewell of Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai. Let me cite an account of a similar scene, not, however, tinged with dark and gloomy forebodings, but charged

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 8: 6-7.

with cheerfulness, hopefulness, and joyousness. ‘When Rabbi Eliezer fell ill, the disciples who visited him entreated him: “Master, teach us the ways of life, so that thereby we might merit eternal bliss.” The teacher replied: “Be heedful of the respect and honour due to your fellow-men. Keep your children from idle speculation, and place them between the knees of scholars. And when you pray, realize before Whom it is that you are praying. Thus will you enjoy life eternal.”’<sup>1</sup>

The passage, edifying as it is, needs elucidation. There is more in it than appears on the surface. The first difficulty it presents is the request: ‘Teach us the way of life.’ Was it necessary to disturb a dying man’s last moments with such a petition? Every schoolchild surely could have told the disciples: ‘Listen to the voice of God, and do His behests—this is the way of life.’

And did not the motive for the request, openly avowed, call for rebuke? We are not servants that work for a hireling’s wage. We are children of the Lord, our God, and should love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might. In our affections He must have no rival. Our object should not be to secure wealth, pleasure, or advancement on earth or even eternal bliss hereafter, but solely to do our Father’s Will and so please our Maker. And yet, strange to say, the Rabbi does not rebuke His disciples, but gives them detailed counsel, and concludes: ‘Thus shall you enjoy life eternal.’

<sup>1</sup> Berachoth, 28b. Aboth d’Rabbi Nathan, c. 19.



There is one word, however, which we must not overlook: 'Teach us the paths of life, that we may enjoy *in them* bliss eternal.' Life depends for its value, not on its quantity, but on its quality. The mode in which we spend our days, not their extent, determines their worth. To eat and drink, toil and sleep, and then die like the beasts of the field that perish, is surely not living, but merely existing, and merits the stigma of the liturgist, 'The super-eminence of man over the brute is nought, for all is vanity.'

'Teach us the ways of life, so that *in them* we may enjoy bliss eternal,' that is, tell us how to live the highest type of life so that, while still on earth, we may already catch glimpses of heaven. And the Master replies: Take the patriarchs of the Jewish people as your exemplars. *Be heedful of the honour due to your fellow-men.* Remember that you are all travellers on the same road. Prove yourselves good comrades to each other. The helper of to-day is the obliged of to-morrow. When aiding another with word of counsel, or deed of kindness, proffer your aid so delicately that the beneficiary shall not feel the burden of obligation. Show yourselves courteous to all—rich and poor alike, and then you will be regarded as princes, even as your ancestor, Abraham, was styled a prince of God because of his courtesy and courtliness.

Take the third patriarch as your pattern. He toiled by day and watched by night to provide for the wants of his household. But he cared for their spiritual as

well as for their material needs. When Jacob leaves his uncle's house, he charges the members of his family : ‘Remove the strange Gods which are among you ; cleanse yourselves and change your garments, and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will build there an altar to the God who answered me on the day of my distress.’<sup>1</sup>

‘*Keep your children from frivolity*’ ; for Satan ever finds some mischief for idle hands to do. ‘*Place them between the knees of scholars.*’ Do not be content with providing them with a few scanty hours’ religious instruction in the week. Let them breathe a religious atmosphere in the home, as if they were in constant association with scholars and saints. Teach them high principles, not merely in theory but practically by your own examples.

And as for yourselves, *when you pray, realize before Whom it is that you pray.* Let Isaac serve as your model. A full-grown man of thirty-seven years, he meekly submits to be bound and laid for sacrifice on Moriah’s altar. His life was of no account to him in comparison with the service of God. When you are engaged in worship, bear in mind that all human beings are but grains of sand, specks of dust, their existence a bubble floating on the sea of time. Put away arrogance, pride and self-importance.

Let us take Rabbi Eliezer’s counsel to heart and apply it to our own lives. Let us cultivate meekness and modesty ; look well to the ways of our households ; teach our children the fear and

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 35 : 2-3.

the love of God, and the love of our fellow-men. So shall we, like the high priest in the sanctuary of old, make worthy atonement for ourselves, our families, the whole house of Israel. So shall we have chosen paths of life, walking in which, we shall have a foretaste of bliss eternal. So shall we make provision for our long journey, and fit ourselves to behold hereafter the King in His beauty, and be satisfied, when we awake, with His vision.

All-merciful Father, we appear before Thee, on this the holiest day of the year, in fear and trembling. Shame and confusion cover our faces. For Thou art robed in light as in a garment. Thou art the source and essence of purity and truth, while we are vessels of clay, drinking iniquity like water. But Thou invitest us to return to Thee; Thou openest the door of repentance. Thou holdest out Thy hand to sinners. Receive us, we beseech Thee, on this holy Day of Atonement in love and mercy and forgiveness. Remember us unto life, O King Who delightest in life; inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Thine own sake, O God of Life. Let none of us be cut off in the midst of his days. Let the promise of youth be fulfilled in maturity. When we attain old age, do not cast us off, do not abandon us when our strength faileth. Give all—young and old—time, opportunity, capacity, and willingness to retrieve the errors of the past; create in each of us a pure



heart, renew in all of us a steadfast will. Restore to us the joy of Thy salvation; support us with Thy generous spirit. Fulfil to us the promise made to Thy faithful servant when he besought Thee on behalf of Thy erring people. When we cry, answer us as Thou didst answer him. Reply to us as Thou didst reply to him with the blessed word סלחתי—‘I have forgiven.’ Amen.

## THE FOUR PLANTS.

CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE, FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST OF  
TABERNACLES, 1909.

THE penitential season is past ; the awe-inspiring days are gone ; but our solemn convocations are not yet concluded. The cycle of festivals that began with the first of Tishri is completed by the feast ushered in last night with joy and gladness. And herein is exhibited the excellence of Judaism, which does not permit its adherents to rush from one extreme to another. The rigour and austerities of the White Fast are not followed by a riot of excess ; no bacchanalia succeed our vigils or fasts. The close of the Day of Atonement is celebrated with rejoicing. But our joy is sober, chastened by the consciousness that the eye of God is constantly upon us. We rejoice on this feast, but we 'rejoice before the Lord.' We exchange our well-appointed homes for frail structures roofed with latticed branches, open to the sky ; thus emphasizing the truth that our surest strength is trust in Him 'Who on the day of trouble will shelter us in the secrecy of His tabernacle.'<sup>1</sup>

We shall to-morrow take into our hands four plants, the citron, the palm branch, the myrtle and the willows,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 27 : 5

and shall rejoice with them before the Lord, waving them in all directions—to the north, south, east and west, upwards to the sky and down again towards the ground, thus proclaiming God Sovereign of the Universe: ‘In Heaven above and on earth beneath, there is none beside Him.’

Marvellous is the power of a faith, the observances of which knit us to a glorious past with cords of love stronger than cables of steel, and which transform lives, otherwise prosaic, into the noblest poetry. The bowers we erect, at this inclement season in these chill northern climes, transport us in imagination to the burning sands of the Arabian desert, where our forefathers dwelt, surrounded by clouds of Divine glory. The palm branch and the citron—handfuls of exotics—recall to us a later epoch in our history, when Israel lived in his own land, everyone beneath his vine and his fig tree.

But there is another—a wider, one might say, a universal—aspect under which this feast and its observances may be regarded. For the last eighteen centuries Israel has been without a land. A homeless wanderer, driven from country to country, with but intermittent periods of rest, denied the right to till the soil, restricted to trade and commerce, having no direct connection with agriculture, he, nevertheless, celebrates year by year at this season a harvest feast, and thus exhibits community of interest, sense of kinship and sympathy with all mankind, qualities which form the true characteristics of our people rather than

the cold isolation which our detractors, political and literary, impute to, and would force upon, us. And this universal sympathy runs like a golden thread throughout the observances of Tabernacles. This feast is the season of our gladness. We are bidden to rejoice. With whom? With our sons and daughters, with our menservants and handmaidens. The Levite, the widow, the orphan must also not be excluded from our rejoicing. Has not one category still been omitted? Yes, the stranger, that is, the Gentile, who does not belong to our race and does not profess our creed; he too should not be denied the opportunity of participating in our festivity. To-morrow, and again on the Eighth day of the Festival, we shall read, as lessons from the Prophets, parts of the account in the book of Kings of the dedication of the Temple. When this notable event took place, Israel formed a strong, independent and united kingdom, under the most powerful of Hebrew rulers and wisest of men. Still, the national sympathy with the Gentile world had not weakened since the days when they were wanderers in the wilderness. On the occasion of the dedication of the Temple, Solomon pronounced a stirring and impressive prayer, in which the following passage occurs: 'And moreover, for the stranger that is not of our people, that cometh from a far country, for Thy name's sake, do Thou from Heaven, Thy abode, hear his prayer, and do according to all that he asks Thee.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 8 : 41-43.

Moreover, as long as the Temple stood, seventy steers were sacrificed on this festival on behalf of the seventy nations into which mankind was in ancient times divided. Again, on the Eighth day of this feast we shall offer up a prayer for rain. We shall implore Heaven to send beneficent showers, not only on the land specially sacred and endeared to us by its early associations, but over the whole surface of the globe, wherever and whenever the gemlike drops are needed.

But why should I go to the closing days of the Festival for illustrations? This morning, we read in the lesson from the Prophets a text with which every Jew—adult or child—is familiar, because it forms the conclusion of our daily prayers: ‘The Eternal will be King over the whole earth; on that day the Eternal will be One and His Name One.’ This text voices our aspirations, gives expression to our innermost convictions. Centuries may elapse before this consummation will be realized; nations, for yet a period, may settle the issues they deem vital to their interests by the stern arbitrament of war. But sooner or later, all mankind will, we doubt not, form one band, one brotherhood, acknowledging God as the King of the Universe, proclaiming that the Eternal is One and His Name One.

What can we do to prove the genuineness of our professions, the sincerity of our convictions? The four plants we take in our hands furnish the answer.

They are types and emblems of qualities we should emulate, virtues we should cultivate, if we are to do our part in furthering the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth.

The citron, beautiful in form and colour, delicate in fragrance, and, withal, a luscious fruit, shall serve us as a symbol of gentleness and sweetness of disposition, of sympathy and love. The citron, chief of the group of plants, recalled to our wise men the hoary figure of the first of the patriarchs—Abraham—who won all hearts by his kindliness, by his benevolence and beneficence impartially shown to stranger and kinsman. Even as iron sharpens iron, and deep answers to deep, so the chords of human hearts vibrate in unconscious unison. Who can doubt that the patriarch's gentleness softened all those who were in contact with him, or came under the sphere of his influence?

The citron is not only a fragrant but also a delicious fruit. Sympathy should not be a barren sentiment; it should take practical shape and be translated into action. But, even as the citron must be free from blemish, so the practice of charity should not be marred by low personal motives, vanity, self-interest, or hunger for popular applause. The bountiful Provider gives all and receives nought in return. Ought we not to rejoice to follow in His footsteps, if we are so fortunate as to be able to be His almoners?

The palm branch, straight and upright, is a symbol



of strict integrity and rectitude. If its top is broken, it is no longer fit for use in Divine service.<sup>1</sup> So let us live that we should not have to bend our heads in shame, that, to the end of our days, we should be able to look the whole world in the face. We should constantly have in mind the text : ' The Lord is righteous, He loveth righteousness, He will look at those who are upright.'<sup>2</sup>

The charge is sometimes made that those who wear their phylacteries broad, who are scrupulously observant of every minute ceremonial detail, often compromise with their consciences, permit themselves latitude of principle, and exhibit looseness in their dealings with their fellow-men. The accusation, we confess with shame, is in some cases too well founded. We do not accuse co-religionists of conscious or unconscious hypocrisy. But though the Day of Atonement is over, we would again earnestly impress upon the congregation, that wrongs inflicted on our fellow-men are double-dyed crimes against God Who gave to us not one but two tables of the testimony on which the commandments, ' Thou shalt not steal,' ' Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,' ' Thou shalt not covet,' were engraved as distinctly as the prohibition of idolatry or of the taking of God's name in vain, or the duty of setting apart a weekly day of rest. This view is emphasized by our wise men when they tell us that a palm which we have obtained in other than honest ways must not be used

<sup>1</sup> Succah, 2 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 11 : 7.

in Divine service; <sup>1</sup> for we are not permitted to resort to illegitimate means even for a legitimate end. So far is the principle carried through the entire range of Jewish law and the Jewish religion that it is forbidden to recite grace over a meal not honestly earned. The benediction in such a case would be not a blessing but a blasphemy.

The myrtle, fresh and evergreen, retaining its leaves throughout the year, is an emblem of constancy. Not only when the bright summer sun of prosperity is shining above our heads, but also in the bleak autumn and dreary winter of adversity and sorrow, shall we retain faith in God, in ourselves, in human nature. No stroke of fate, however severe, shall make us cynical, sceptical, doubtful of Divine goodness, callous to human sufferings. The myrtle shall infuse courage and hope in our hearts: 'Weeping may tarry for the night, but in the morning cometh joy.'<sup>2</sup> The bleakness of each autumn, the dreariness of every winter, will surely be followed by, and forgotten in, the fresh promise of another spring, the glorious fulfilment of another summer.

And the willows of the brook—what have these to teach us? Their drooping branches, overhanging the still pond and retired stream, are a type of modesty—a virtue in which some of us are sadly deficient. The lack of self-restraint and quiet dignity is responsible for much of the prejudice, misunderstanding, and hostility from which the whole nation suffered in the past, and

<sup>1</sup> Succah, 2 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 30 : 6.



still suffers. How frequently do we hear complaints of the Jew's obtrusiveness, his loudness of voice, manner, tone ; his want of regard for the feelings and susceptibilities of his Gentile neighbour, even on the first day of the week, the general day of rest. Are these complaints unfounded or exaggerated ? Can we ask, when we note the deplorable want of decorum in our places of worship on the holiest days of the year ? How many of our young men forget, when they come to this shrine, that the place on which they tread is holy ground, that this is none other than the house of God, and this the gate to Heaven.

These, then, are the qualities recommended us by the four plants—gentleness and kindness, strictest integrity, constancy in faith, modesty and humility. But who can attain the ideal ? Who can hope to become the paragon of all the virtues ? We are limited in capacity, varied in temperament. Some are gifted with beautiful and inspiring thoughts which, however, they are powerless to realize in action. Their lives are like myrtles, fragrant, but producing no fruit. Some are active in well-doing, but rough, brusque, and overbearing in manner, like the palm which conceals satisfying food amidst swordlike leaves. The majority belong to the common herd and are undistinguished like the willows, which are neither fragrant nor fruit-bearing. Few indeed can claim comparison with the citron, which is beautiful in form and colour, and likewise a fragrant fruit. Still let this thought console us. We all have value in the eyes of God even as all plants have

their uses. Let us not unduly depreciate ourselves, for self-depreciation is often the excuse for inertia, but especially let us avoid depreciation of others. As the sage said, 'Despise no man, for there is none but hath his hour.'<sup>1</sup> Let us seek out the good in ourselves, value the good in others, and strengthen both by a close bond of kinship and union. So shall we further the plans of Him 'Who builds His chambers in Heaven, who has His mansion in the skies and will establish His bond and covenant on earth'<sup>2</sup>—a covenant of fellowship and a bond of brotherhood that shall embrace all mankind.

<sup>1</sup> Ethics of the Fathers, 4 : 3.

<sup>2</sup> Amos, 9 : 6.

## THE SEDER.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, SABBATH BEFORE PASSOVER, 1902.

TO-DAY recalls the first *שבת הנרול*, the great Sabbath in Egypt, when Israel first became conscious of himself. In obedience to the Divine behest, our forefathers bade defiance to Egypt's lords and Egypt's gods. On the tenth of Nissan, the head of each household took a lamb, worshipped by the Egyptians as a deity; kept it for four days in the home; and, on the fourteenth of the month, sacrificed it, sprinkled its blood on the lintel and the doorposts, braved the peril of death for the sake of God's commandments; and so our forefathers approved themselves worthy to become God's people. Then did Israel come to birth as a nation. That first Passover in Egypt was a family feast. The command to take lambs was addressed to the heads of families. The paschal sacrifice was to be consumed as a family meal. Only where the number of members in the household was too small, were strangers from another house admitted to the family circle. The lamb was to be roasted whole, and no bone was to be broken—rules symbolic of family unity, the only sure basis for national unity and strength.

That first Passover in Egypt had many notable successors in subsequent generations, in biblical and post-biblical times. A Roman eye-witness in the time of the second Temple describes the joyous celebration of the Passover in his day. For weeks before the fourteenth of Nissan, the outskirts of Jerusalem were white with countless flocks of lambs and kids. The political constitution of Palestine, in form monarchical, was in essence democratic. No favour was shown to rank or wealth. The king himself had to wait his turn in the joyous throng of pilgrims ascending the Temple Mount. The precincts of the Sanctuary were guarded by Levites who regulated the entrance and exit of the worshippers. While the Paschal sacrifices were offered up, the Hallel was sung to the accompaniment of instrumental music.

Like the Passover on the banks of the Nile, the Passover in the Holy City was a family feast as well as a national celebration. For our forefathers, when they appeared before the Lord, brought with them their wives, sons and daughters, their menservants and maidservants. Nor were the poor forgotten. The widow and orphan, the Levite and stranger shared in the general festivity.

The Temple was razed to the ground and reduced to ashes. Rome's iron heel pressed on the neck of Judæa. Yet the Feast of Passover continued to be observed as a feast of faith and hope. Not without significance is the narrative in the *Haggadah* of the four scholars who spent the whole night in *Bené Berak*

discussing the Exodus, till their disciples came and announced to them that the time had come for reading the morning Shema. Just at this period, when the fortunes of Israel were under a cloud and the sun of Judaism seemed eclipsed, when the study and practice of God's Law were regarded with disfavour and even proscribed, the Jew's devotion to his faith and people flamed forth anew. From the memories of the past Israel's leaders and teachers drew strength and inspiration for the present and the future. For they felt convinced that the loving-kindness of the Lord had not ceased and His mercies were not spent. He would again show them wonders as in the days of the departure from Egypt. Not the sword nor their own right arms had saved them. God's arm and the light of His face had favoured them, and so would it be again, for His name's sake.

In the long night of the exile, Passover continued to be a family feast. The Seder night was an object lesson for all, especially for the young. It exhibits a profound knowledge of child psychology. Things seen are mightier than things heard. The teachers' lessons often fall unheeded on their scholars' listless ears; even parents' monitions fade from the memory. But what Israelite will ever forget the unleavened bread; the bitter herbs and *Charoseth*—symbols of bitter servitude and sweet freedom; the roast bone and the roast egg—memorials of the *Korban Pesach* and the *Korban Chagigah*? What Israelite will ever forget the loving cup filled in honour of Elijah—emblem of hope to

Israel, that forlorn wanderer among the nations? What son of Israel can ever forget the quaint old-world rites of the ליל שמורים, the watch night, the night of observances, or the four questions which introduce its ritual and the nursery catches with which it concludes—compositions that are childlike but not childish, for they impress upon the young mind the cardinal principles of Jewish theology, the Unity of God, for which Israel has gladly suffered martyrdom, and Divine Providence, Israel's solace in his tribulations?

The sceptic may mockingly ask, what meaneth this laborious, antiquated service to you?

מה העבודה הזאת לכם. מה הטורח הזה

שהטרחת אותנו

But we are convinced that Judaism would be shorn of much of its beauty and strength, if it were deprived of the Seder. And the same remark applies to all the rites and ceremonies of Judaism. They enshrine the history and legend of Israel's glorious, if tragic, history. They illustrate the sublime truths and doctrines of the Jewish faith. What exhortation from the pulpit, to bend our will to the will of our Father in Heaven, can equal in force and effectiveness the simple command to bind the *Tephillin* round our forehead and forearm? What homily on the sanctity of the Jewish home is so eloquent and effective as the *Mezuzah* on the door, by which we consecrate our home life and commend it to the Divine Protection? The *Tzitzith* beneath the Jewish soldier's tunic serve to identify him among a thousand Gentiles, so that if he falls on the battlefield,



his body may be brought to קבר ישראל. But the *Fringes* fulfil a higher function, inasmuch as they constantly remind him of the links attaching him to his race and creed.

I do not forget that rites and ceremonies are not the be-all and end-all of Judaism. Morality plays a large and essential part in our religious system ; and of that morality, with its mingling of justice and love, we must be the practical exponents. We dare not compound with our consciences. Pious exercises will not atone for wrongs against our fellows. The last of the prophets, in this morning's lesson, denounces sorcerers, poisoners, adulterers, sweaters who rob the worker of his just wage, wrong the defenceless widow and orphan, and wrest the cause of the stranger. The Psalmist addresses the רשע in the following impassioned question : ' And to the wicked God has said, " What business hast thou to recount My statutes and to take My covenant on thy lips, when thou hatest morality ? " '

It must also be remembered that the virtue of a rite depends not upon the act, but upon the spirit in which it is performed. The commandments of God are to illumine the mind and rejoice the heart. Mind and heart must therefore co-operate with hand in their performance. Devout Israelites, accordingly, before performing a Mitzvah, meditate upon its spiritual significance.

Bearing these two qualifications in mind, that rites and ceremonies are only part and not the whole of Judaism, and that their performance must

not be mechanical and unintelligent, I confidently assert that it is these rites and ceremonies which have secured the continuity of our religion and the solidarity of our people. Not merely during Passover but throughout the year cultivate home worship, scrupulously observe the ordinances of our faith for your own sake, for the sake of your children, for the sake of the religion dear to you, for the sake of our Heavenly Father, till the promise of the prophet will be fulfilled, and the Tishbite will at last herald the advent of the long-expected Guest, when the hearts of parents will turn to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents, and all mankind will celebrate with Israel a new Passover, a Feast of Universal Emancipation.



## THE LESSONS OF PASSOVER FOR OUR TIMES.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER, 1902.

LAST night, we ushered in with joy and gladness the Feast of our Freedom, the anniversary of Israel's birth as a nation.

If we wish to appreciate the momentousness and importance of the event commemorated by this festival, we need but picture to ourselves the slave's hopeless lot—his back bent with heavy burdens, his visage marred with cruel sufferings, his physique stunted, his mental horizon narrowed, his intellectual growth arrested ; his complete moral and spiritual degradation. Such was the condition of our forefathers in Egypt ; and from this abject state God in His goodness delivered them, and raised them to the highest pinnacle of human greatness, when He elected them to be His own people.

We read in the Talmud that once, on the first evening of Passover, Rabbi Nachman said to Doru, his servant, ' What would you do if anyone emancipated you and loaded you with untold wealth ? ' ' I would express unbounded gratitude to my benefactor,' rejoined the servant. ' Then there is no occasion for

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me to say *Mah Nishtanah*.'<sup>1</sup> And certainly, when we think of the wide distance separating Israel's state before and after the Exodus, we need seek no further reasons for celebrating this feast. With heart and soul we will join in the glad refrain: 'This is my God, and I will glorify Him; the God of my father, and I will exalt Him.'

But Passover is not merely a feast of gratitude; it is also a season for earnest reflection.

It is surely as profitable to inquire into the causes that led to the enslavement of our ancestors as to discuss the merits, for the sake of which they were redeemed. When Jacob appeared before Pharaoh, his family numbered seventy souls. They enjoyed the protection of their powerful kinsman, the viceroy and benefactor of Egypt. Settled in the fertile land of Goshen, what wonder that they increased and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty. But they did not observe the prudence for which the third patriarch was noted. They did not remember that they had come to Egypt to sojourn there. They forgot that they were strangers in a strange land. It was consequently easy for the representative of a new and usurping dynasty to divert odium from himself by raising the cry of an alien invasion and inaugurating an era of persecution.

The enslavement of the Hebrews, however, made their inherent virtues manifest. With fair speech,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pesachim, 116a.

<sup>2</sup> בפה רך = בפרך, Midrash.

with promises of a rich guerdon, Pharaoh induced our forefathers to toil for him. The promise was broken. Yet his Hebrew subjects did not rise in rebellion. Peaceful, law-abiding, industrious, they bent the back to the burden and turned the cheek to the smiter. They carried patience, meekness, and humility to the verge of spiritlessness, so that one would hardly think that out of such unpromising material a free and independent nation could ever be created. Yet, when the time came, the despised people took its rightful place among the nations. Gold, though fallen into the mire, is still gold. Silver, black with the incrustation of centuries of neglect, only needs a little labour to restore its dazzling radiance. The Hebrews in Egypt were marred with blemishes, physical and mental. The Midrash says that of those who left the banks of the Nile, many were blind, many deaf, dumb, lame and crippled. But what a marvellous transformation had taken place when, three months later, the nation stood at the foot of Sinai! The blind could see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk. They were made whole and sound by the royal touch, the touch of the King of Kings.<sup>1</sup> It would be incorrect to assert that all the Hebrew slaves were perfect. Only a fifth, tradition records, was emancipated; four-fifths, hopelessly degenerate, perished in the three days' darkness, unworthy of redemption.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Tanchuma on Exod. 19 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* on the word **וְחִמְשָׁם** in Exod. 13 : 18.

mixed multitude, too, that accompanied the Israelites in their wanderings, caused the latter, on more than one occasion, grievously to sin. Yet the nation was sound at the core. 'Its stock was holy seed'<sup>1</sup>—  
 ורע קרש מצבתה

The vicissitudes of the Jewish people in the Middle Ages is a counterpart of Israel's experiences on the banks of the Nile. It would be a mistake to assume that mediæval Jewish history presents a dreary vista of suffering, wholly unrelieved by any gleam of happiness. In the wilderness of exile there was many a green oasis, with crystal springs and overhanging palm trees. The Iberian peninsula, for example, formed, for a long period, a veritable Goshen to the Jews. In Spain they increased in numbers, wealth, position, and influence. Some even attained the rank of ministers and advisers to the Crown. But prosperity begat corruption. Wealth had, as its concomitants, luxury and ostentatious display. This, in turn, roused envy, jealousy, ill-will, and hatred, which were fanned by fanaticism into a fierce flame. And the fire of persecution, cruel as death, harsh as the grave, devoured and spared not. Then came exile, comparable in its tragedy with the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet persecution had its compensations. The Ghetto walls imprisoned the Jew, but, at the same time, they shielded his children's eyes from horrid sights, his children's ears from dreadful sounds. Outside, scenes of savage lust and cruelty

<sup>1</sup> Is. 6 : 13.

might be witnessed. Within the Ghetto, Jewish family life presented an idyllic picture of gentleness, sweet kindness, and white purity. Outside there was the dense darkness of ignorance; but unto all Israel there was light in their habitations. It is a truism that in the Dark Ages, rightly so styled, the Jews kept the torch of learning alight. In his latest book on Morocco, Mr. Budget Meakin asserts that even in the domain of art—especially architecture—much of the credit given to the Moors is really due to Jewish genius. Certainly, no nation in the world can show, in proportion to its numbers, so brilliant an array of scholars, poets, philosophers, as can the Jews in mediæval times. There is, of course, a reverse to the shield. Many dignitaries of Roman Catholicism were converted Hebrews. Entire congregations preferred the waters of baptism to the flames of the Inquisition. But Judaism was all the stronger for these defections; like gold passed through the furnace, it was purified of its dross.

History repeats itself. We have the virtues of our fathers; let us guard against the defects that wrought their undoing. Since 1791, the civil disabilities under which our people so long laboured have, in many countries, been removed, and in a short period Jews have come to the front in literature, science, art, and politics. But the millennium has not yet arrived. Our co-religionists in France, Germany, Austria, Russia dreamed dreams and suffered the shock of a rude awakening. The golden dawn had at last come, they thought. But it was followed by the

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hideous night of anti-Semitism. Let us pray that these experiences may not be ours. We need fear no such fate if we evince our gratitude for the liberties we enjoy by guarding against their abuse. We should avoid ostentation and idle display, which only aroused the irritation of Gentile neighbours, and which have in the past wrought dreadful havoc. Plain living and high thinking should be our ideal, the simplicity and reserve that distinguished our ancestor Jacob, our guiding principles.

So will every weapon forged against us fail, and every tongue that unjustly accuses us be itself condemned, till the advent of the true golden era, when all the world will celebrate with us the feast of a new reconciliation.



## RABBI JEHUDAH THE PRINCE.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, MAY 5, 1900.

THE maxims of the *Pirke Aboth*, appointed to be read on Sabbath afternoons during the summer months, are valuable not only for their profound wisdom and lofty ethical spirit, but also for the clear light which they throw upon the characters of their authors and the circumstances of the times in which these sages flourished.

When, for instance, we read the saying of Antigonos of Socho : ' Be not like servants that serve a master for the sake of a wage ; but be like servants that serve a master without expectation of recompense,'<sup>1</sup> we cannot help admiring the loftiness of this counsel to disinterested service of God. We also recall the fact that misconception of its true meaning led to one of the Sadducee heresies—the denial of reward and retribution hereafter.

When Simon ben Shetach advises : ' Be sedulous in sifting evidence,'<sup>2</sup> it reminds us of a tragic episode in his own life. Through lending too credulous an ear to suborned witnesses, he, like a second Brutus, condemned his own son to death ; and only when too late did he discover that these witnesses had

<sup>1</sup> Ethics of the Fathers, 1 : 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1 : 9.



perjured themselves ; hence the earnest counsel, which is the outcome of a father's anguish.

Does not the gentleness of Hillel breathe in his recommendation : ' Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving God's creatures, and bringing all men to a knowledge of His law ? ' <sup>1</sup> Are not his untiring energy and whole-hearted devotion to duty clearly reflected in his three momentous questions : ' If I am not for myself, who is for me ? ' ' If I am for myself alone, what am I ? ' and ' If not now, when then ? ' <sup>2</sup>

Some years ago, I devoted a discourse to a sketch of the character and career of this great sage in Israel. To-day, I propose to speak of a descendant no less illustrious. I refer to Rabbi Jehudah the Prince, the compiler of the Mishnah. The characters of the two men present some similarities, but more contrasts. Hillel came up from Babylon a poor, friendless youth. Rabbi Jehudah, his descendant, was born in the purple. Hillel surmounted the obstacles which dire poverty and obscurity had placed in his path, and without influence won his way by sheer hard work and merit to the highest position in the Jewish commonwealth, the Presidentship of the Sanhedrin with the title of *Nassi*. Rabbi Jehudah successfully resisted the more subtle temptations of wealth and rank. He did not yield to sloth nor indulge in luxury. And so, like his ancestor Hillel, he also gained an abiding-place in the temple of immortal fame by his great services to his people and his faith.

<sup>1</sup> Ethics of the Fathers, 1 : 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1 : 14.

Rabbi Jehudah is known by three surnames. The dignity of his office as Patriarch of Palestine conferred on him the title of Rabbi Jehudah, *the Prince*. By reason of his position as the most distinguished teacher of his day, he is frequently styled, in the Mishnah, רַבִּי, 'Master.' After his death he received the designation: 'Our Teacher, the Saint, or Rabbi Jehudah, the Holy'—a title fully merited by the sage who, throughout his life, consistently strove to realize the ideal expressed at the beginning of this morning's Sedrah: 'Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'<sup>1</sup>

He came into the world at a period fraught with dire trouble and anxiety for the Jewish people. Fifty years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Hebrew state, an attempt was made to regain the lost independence. Bar Cochba, the Son of a Star, as he was styled, raised the standard of revolt. Rabbi Akiba, the great light of Israel, lent his countenance and support to the movement, and hailed Bar Cochba as the promised Messiah. But the nation's hopes were doomed to disappointment. The rising was crushed, Bar Cochba was slain, and Rabbi Akiba cruelly martyred. A period of repression and proscription followed. On the day, however, when Rabbi Akiba died, a child was born to Rabbi Simeon ben Gamliel the Second—Jehudah. And this coincidence was hailed as an auspicious and happy omen, an augury that the dark cloud had a silver lining, and was about to pass away. The well-known text in Ecclesiastes,

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 19 : 2.

‘ the sun rises, the sun sets,’ was applied.<sup>1</sup> Scarcely had one sun set when another sun had already dawned.

Rabbi Jehudah had the advantage of many teachers of different schools of thought, among whom it is sufficient to name Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai,<sup>2</sup> formerly believed to have been the author of the Zohar ; and Rabbi Meir,<sup>3</sup> disciple of Elisha ben Abuyah, who became an unbeliever, and was subsequently known under the name of *Acher*, the Heretic.

This variety of instruction, which deepened Jehudah’s scholarship, broadened his mind, and widened his outlook, unconsciously fitted him for his life’s work—the systematic arrangement of the Traditional Law, the Mishnah which enshrines impartially the most diverse views.

It would be an error to assume that Jewish education in those days was one-sided. Rabbi Jehudah was thoroughly versed not only in Hebrew learning, but also in Greek, Latin and Syriac.<sup>4</sup> The Mishnah is written in pure Hebrew, and the Rabbi made strenuous efforts to substitute the use of the sacred tongue in Palestine for the corrupt Aramaic vernacular. ‘ Why Aramaic?’ he asked. ‘ Either pure Hebrew or pure Greek.’<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Jehudah was an astronomer, and he had the candour to admit that, on some points, the views of the Gentile scientists appeared more reasonable than those of their Jewish *confrères*.<sup>6</sup>

Scholarship, alone, however wide or profound, will only command cold respect, or at most, high

<sup>1</sup> Midr. R. on Eccles. 1 : 5.

<sup>3</sup> Erubin, 13*b*.

<sup>5</sup> Baba Kama, 83*a*.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbath, 147*b*.

<sup>4</sup> Pesachim, 61*a*.

<sup>6</sup> Pesachim, 94*b*.

admiration. To win warm affection, one must cultivate qualities of heart as well as mind. Rabbi Jehudah gathered around him a vast circle of friends by his modesty, affability, and courtesy. Like Hillel, he was the humblest-minded of men.<sup>1</sup> He showed deference to the opinions of his seniors. When a legal point was once put to him, he replied: 'The question is settled; the master (Rabbi José) has already given his decision.'<sup>2</sup> He frankly acknowledged his obligations to his colleagues, and even to his disciples. 'Much have I learned from my masters; more from my fellow-students; most from my scholars.'<sup>3</sup>

His courtesy was not a surface politeness. It sprang from genuine kindness and goodness of heart. He maintained a large number of poor disciples. At a time of scarcity he made no distinction between gentle and simple, learned and ignorant. The account of his wisely indiscriminate charity and his generous help to all in need, without exception, deserves telling.

In a year of famine, Rabbi Jehudah opened his store-houses and treasuries, and issued a proclamation: 'Let all who have read the Scriptures, or studied the Mishnah, enter.' A youth forced his way into the master's presence and asked for help. 'Hast thou read the Mishnah?' 'Nay,' replied the youth. 'Art thou versed in Scripture?' 'No!' 'What, then, can I do for thee, my son?' 'O master, feed me, as one feeds the hound and the raven. God makes no distinctions.

<sup>1</sup> Jerushalmi Kilaim, chap. 9, paragr. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbath, 51b.

<sup>3</sup> Taanith, 7a. (According to Hamburger; but in the reference the saying is attributed to R. Chanina.)

His mercies are extended to all His creatures. Should we not walk in His footsteps?' The master yielded to the youth's importunities. And then his heart smote him. 'Have I given of my bread to one unworthy of it?' Simeon, his son, consoled him: 'Possibly this was Jonathan ben Amram, who refuses to derive any material profit or temporal advantage from his devotion to God's law.' The surmise proved correct. The applicant, who had had the singular interview with the Patriarch, was indeed Jonathan ben Amram. And then it flashed across Rabbi Jehudah's mind that he had been wrong, and he issued a second proclamation: 'Let all who are in want enter, whether they are learned or untutored; all who are hungry have a right to be fed.'<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Jehudah was a great administrator and educationalist as well as a philanthropist. From all parts of Palestine, and even from Babylon, scholars flocked to learn wisdom from his lips. From the latter country came Aba Areka, known as Rav, and his colleague Samuel Yarchinai, Rabbi Chia, his two sons, and many others.

He not only taught at Tiberias, Sepphoris, and Beth Shearim. He also paid pastoral visits throughout the length and breadth of the land. Many congregations, he found, were apathetic through the lack of spiritual guidance. To correct this evil, he ordained some of his disciples, and appointed them religious heads of communities. But in order to obtain ordination from Rabbi Jehudah the

<sup>1</sup> Baba Bathra, 8a.



Prince, learning alone was not sufficient : unblemished character and love for the vocation of a religious teacher were also essential requisites.

Thus, Bar Kappara never obtained the *Semichah*, not because of want of knowledge, but because he was endowed with the dubious gifts of a mordant wit—a pungent and scathing sarcasm that spared none. Samuel also, for reasons not stated, never obtained this honour. He was an eminent astronomer, who could say, ‘The paths of the sky are as familiar to me as the streets of Nehardai.’<sup>1</sup> He was likewise a skilful physician whom the Patriarch, on one occasion, summoned to his bedside. When Samuel obeyed the call, his former teacher excused himself for having withheld the coveted Rabbinical diploma from the medical practitioner, and the man of science philosophically replied : ‘I assume that it was foreordained. It must have been written in the book of Adam, “Samuel shall be known as a sage, not as a Rabbi.”’<sup>2</sup>

When Rabbi Jehudah breathed his last, the inmates of his house feared to announce the sad event. At last Bar Kappara stepped before the multitude, and conveyed the sad tidings in the following parable : ‘Angels in heaven and men on earth strove for the possession of the Ark of God. The angels gained the day, and the Ark of God is no more with us.’ ‘Rabbi is dead,’ was the cry of the sorrow-stricken crowd. ‘You have said it, not I,’ replied Bar Kappara. The veneration in which the departed teacher was held found expression in the eulogy of his disciples at the

<sup>1</sup> Berachoth, 58b.

<sup>2</sup> Baba Metzia, 85b.

end of *Massecheth Sotah* : 'When Rabbi died, humility and true reverence departed with him.'

I have said that the characters of our great men find their best expression in the sayings which they have left as a legacy to future ages. Let us cull some of Rabbi Jehudah's gems of thought and phrase. As an educationalist, he laid special stress on the importance of sound religious instruction in childhood and early youth. 'The world exists by the breath of school-children.'<sup>1</sup> 'Even for the building of the Temple youthful scholars should not be taken away from their studies.'<sup>2</sup>

He valued every part of Judaism equally. 'Be as heedful in the fulfilment of what you may regard as an unimportant commandment as in the observance of those you deem weightier precepts, for you are not able to judge the relative value of God's laws.'<sup>3</sup> 'Live in the consciousness that the eye of God is ever upon you.' 'Meditate upon these things and you will not sin. Know that above thee there is an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and that all thine acts are recorded in a book.'<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the maxim that most comprehensively sums up Rabbi Jehudah's mental attitude and outlook is that which forms the introductory paragraph to the second chapter of the *Ethics* : 'What is the course that a man should choose? That which is honourable in his own view, and will secure him honour from his fellow-men.'<sup>5</sup> May we act on this counsel, so that our lives may be honourable in our own eyes and command our neighbour's respect.

<sup>1</sup> Sabbath, 119b.

<sup>3</sup> Ethics of the Fathers, 2 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



## THE NECESSITY FOR REVELATION.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, FIRST DAY OF PENTECOST, 1907.

BRIGHT and beautiful is the fulfilment of summer after the promise of spring. The garden aflame with colour, a feast for the eyes ; the cornfields, vast seas of golden grain, a recompense for weeks of toil and months of anxiety. Yet far brighter, more beautiful and satisfying than the produce of field, garden, and orchard, is the *spiritual* harvest reaped by Israel on this Day of First Fruits. For Pentecost is the natural sequel to Passover ; Sinai was the goal and objective of the Exodus. When Moses was vouchsafed his first Revelation, when God spoke to him from the lowly thorn bush which was ever burning, never consumed—a type of the eternity of the Jewish people—the Almighty promised his faithful servant that those whom he would bring forth from Egyptian servitude would not become a tumultuous horde, a wild disorderly rabble, but a nation, disciplined, refined, elevated by the hallowing influence of religion. ‘When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God by this mountain.’<sup>1</sup>

Faithfully was the promise kept. Fifty days after our forefathers left Egypt, they stood at the foot of

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 3 : 12.

Sinai. The covenant between God and His people was sealed, and, as a token, the most valued treasure in Heaven was entrusted to the sons of men.

Concerning this momentous event, Deborah, the Prophetess, exclaims: 'O Lord, when Thou wentest out of Seir, when Thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens dropped, yea, the clouds dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that of Sinai, from before the Lord, God of Israel.'<sup>1</sup>

And so the Psalmist sings: 'The voice of God cleaves flames of fire. The voice of God makes the wilderness tremble. . . . In His temple, everything declares His glory.'<sup>2</sup>

The Midrash, speaking of this day, says: When God descended on Sinai, accompanied by myriads of angels, to give the law to His people, Heaven came down upon earth; earth rose to meet Heaven. When He was about to announce His will, the kine in the meadows ceased to low, the lambs in the fold to bleat; the birds of the air hushed their melody, the very choir of angels paused in their hymnody. The whole universe was breathlessly silent and expectant. One voice alone was heard, the voice of God, uttering the Ten Words, each of which filled the world with fragrance as of paradise, each of which resounded to the ends of the earth.

What is the sum and substance of this marvelous revelation that was accompanied with so many portents—deafening thunders, blinding lightnings,

<sup>1</sup> Judges, 5: 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 29: 7-9.

terrifying convulsions of nature. The contents of the Decalogue are exceedingly simple. They impress upon us the existence of one God ; forbid the worship of anyone beside Him ; enjoin reverence for His name, bid us set apart one day in seven for bodily rest, spiritual refreshment and renewed self-consecration ; command respect for parents as the representatives of God upon earth ; uphold the sanctity of human life, and reverence for family purity and honour ; assert the rights of private property ; teach respect for truth ; and finally, as a summary, exhort us to restrain the wayward longings and impulses of the heart, and check greed and lust.

Here there is nothing difficult or mysterious. The principles and precepts enunciated fall within the department of natural religion. Was a special revelation needed for commandments which, we might suppose, the human reason would, by its own unaided efforts, have been capable of evolving ? ‘ Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these, who bringeth out their host by number, calleth them all by names ; from Him that is infinite in power and mighty in strength not one is missing,’ exclaims Isaiah.<sup>1</sup> ‘ The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork,’ David sings in the 19th Psalm. Anyone who observes the more than clocklike regularity with which the worlds circling in space keep their appointed times and orbits, notes the stately procession of the seasons, the ebb and flow of the tide, watches the growth of the tender leaf

<sup>1</sup> Is. 40 : 26.

and slender blade of grass, studies the smallest insect, or considers how wonderfully his own frame is made, must have the conviction irresistibly forced upon his mind that there is one Creator who called the universe into being, keeps it in harmony, stills the roar of the waves, and bids the ocean abide within the limits appointed it. Surely, also, the pressure of social environment would, of itself, have taught men that each individual must respect his neighbour's rights if his own are to be respected. Did principles so simple and elementary need to be announced by the awful majesty of God Himself, at the sound of whose voice all Israelites swooned with mingled bliss and terror, so that they implored their leader : ' Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'<sup>1</sup>

History furnishes the answer. Remember the days of old ; consider the annals of early times. Conjure the spirits of antiquity ; bid the hoary figures of the past rise from their graves and give their testimony. Think of the innumerable deities with which human fancy peopled every dale and hill, every stream and rivulet, every grove and thicket. Think of the frailties, weaknesses, and degrading passions which perverted imagination attributed to these deities ; recall the orgies of cruel and licentious rites with which men served their gods : the first-born offered up as propitiatory sacrifices ; the children passed through the fire to Moloch ; the obscene worship of Peor and Ashtoreth ; consider the riot of lust and

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 20 : 19.

murder, the moral anarchy, the spiritual darkness and corruption in which mankind weltered before the revelation, and indeed long after it ; and you will see the paramount necessity of a special annunciation of what we now regard as the elementary principles of religion and morality. You will recognize that the greatest boon conferred upon the human race was the Divine Revelation—a spiritual creation, counterpart of the physical creation of the universe. Even as, at the beginning, chaos gave way to order, and the command, ‘Let there be light,’ brought into existence harmony, beauty, organized life ; so, when a spiritual light was kindled on Sinai’s summit, the spectres of moral anarchy and chaos gradually melted away and vanished.

The power of the human intellect to discover truth for itself is frequently asserted ; and so also, in discussing the documents of Judaism, critics sometimes employ the terms ‘progressive revelation’ and ‘increasing purpose.’ We must not forget, however, that in one department only has the claim been made good. In the physical world we have widened the area of knowledge and conquered new kingdoms. Here the advance has been gradual, steady, and sometimes even phenomenally rapid. There has been little need to retrace one’s steps. But in what concerns the knowledge of God, the soul, conduct, duty, ideals, the human intellect has not marched, but has simply marked time. Theories have been laboriously built up and accepted in one age, only to be discredited

in the next. Systems, apparently coherent and irrefragable, framed by ingenious thinkers and hailed by contemporaries as the last word, the ultimate expression of the truth, have been riddled by critics, demolished and overthrown like a house of cards. Hypotheses and their refutations sum up the history of large portions of philosophy. If, then, the sentences of the Decalogue are universally accepted and regarded as self-evident axioms—propositions that need no demonstration—that is a tribute to their Divine truth. Their essential and unique value consists in their having been revealed. They are not human speculations, theories of limited thinkers to be cavilled at and criticized. They are the terse and pregnant expressions of the Almighty will.

‘I did not speak to you in secret,’ says the prophet.<sup>1</sup> The Torah was not given at night, in some obscure corner, to one or two persons. It was announced on a summer’s morn, in broad daylight, from the summit of a hill, to an entire nation numbering three million souls. The Decalogue was declared not in a settled land but in the wilderness; not to Israel only, but to all mankind. Israel’s merit consists in the fact that while others rejected the Law, Israel accepted it. This constitutes our sole right to the title, ‘The Chosen People.’ God loves all peoples. But our fathers alone submitted to the Divine will; they alone assumed the obligations of the Divine words. There is a legend that, before the Revelation on Sinai,

<sup>1</sup> Is. 45 : 19.



the Torah was first offered to the Edomites. These cautiously inquired : 'What is written in the Law ?' 'Thou shalt not kill.' 'How can we accept such a code ? Was not the founder of our race told by his father, "By thy sword shalt thou live ?"' It was then offered to the children of Ishmael. These too asked : 'What is written in the Law ?' 'Thou shalt not steal.' 'Then the law is unsuitable to our conditions and circumstances, for we get our livelihood by plundering the wayfarer,' replied the wild son of the desert. And so each nation, in turn, carefully weighed and balanced profit against loss, clearly saw that the acceptance of the Torah involved a conflict between the higher and lower self, necessitated self-restraint and renunciation, and felt unequal to making the necessary sacrifice. Israel alone, with eager enthusiasm, took an unlimited responsibility. 'Whatever the Lord saith, that will we do and hear.' Our forefathers did not pause to measure the extent of their obligation, to count the cost of obedience. Greatly daring, they achieved great things. At that moment of enthusiasm they ranked with the angels, whose obedience to the Divine behest is so prompt, unhesitating, and instantaneous that it seems almost to anticipate the command, just as the lightning flash appears to precede the thunderclap. For thus the Psalmist addresses the Heavenly hosts : 'Bless the Lord, ye His angels, mighty in strength, *that do* His word, *hearkening* unto the voice of His word.'

It is noble to assume a trust. It is nothing but



common honesty to discharge it. On this day, we should not only rejoice that God has chosen us from among all peoples and entrusted us with His law. The words of His law should be sweet in our mouths, as if they had, this day, been delivered for the first time. Lip service to the Decalogue is rendered by everyone. From the Jew something more is required. The prophet's call is not yet obsolete : ' Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and I am God.'

In the discharge of our trust lies our salvation. Every nation, its mission once accomplished, has passed away. Unless we bear testimony for God, we too lag superfluous upon the stage. Loyalty to the Law, whole-hearted and enthusiastic devotion to it, will alone preserve us, for the Torah is our life and length of days. The lowly thorn-bush will burn and not be consumed only as long as God speaks from it and through it. So let us live that we may be worthy of the assurance : ' I, the Eternal, do not change ; and ye, children of Jacob, will not be destroyed.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 3 : 6.

## THE DISCIPLINE OF CEREMONY.

HAMPSTEAD SYNAGOGUE, JANUARY 25, 1907.

ON the placards of some of the Metropolitan newspapers, during the last ten days, you might have observed in bold type the headline 'The New Theology.'

On turning to the columns of one of the journals in question, you would have seen that the reference was to pronouncements made by Sir Oliver Lodge, the Principal of the Birmingham University,<sup>1</sup> and more recently by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple. These men, one an eminent scientist of European reputation, the other a distinguished Nonconformist minister with a large following, have openly discarded and repudiated tenets which lie at the foundation of the dominant creed as commonly accepted.

It is not my business here to discuss the doctrines under review. But we may express satisfaction that dogmas borrowed from heathen mythologies, concerning some of which a Father of the Church was driven to the confession, 'Credo quia impossibilia sunt,' dogmas which, instead of promoting peace and goodwill, have fomented discord and hatred,

<sup>1</sup> Reported in the *Hibbert Journal*, July 1906.

and the propagation of which has caused endless misery, are loosening their hold on thoughtful people.

We rejoice, too, that in Judaism dogmas such as these have no place nor parallel. 'I am the first, I am the last, and beside Me there is no God,'<sup>1</sup> said the prince of prophets. On this the Midrash comments: 'I am the first, I have no father. I am the last, I have no brother. Beside Me there is no God—I have no son.' The Jew has been spared mental perplexity and anxious heart-searchings concerning the fundamentals of his faith. We are asked to accept the existence of God, infinite in wisdom, goodness and power, One and Incorporeal; the revelation of His will to man; His providence, justice, and love. These doctrines are so simple that, as soon as they are stated, their reasonableness carries conviction to the candid mind. They need no modification and no restatement by the light of modern thought. Judaism is not devoid of dogma. But its dogmas are not forced upon us. The appeal is to reason, not to blind faith: 'Know the God of thy fathers.' 'Hear, O Israel,' that is, understand, O Israel—'that the Eternal, our God, the Eternal is One.'

Judaism accordingly lays stress not on theory but on practice. 'To learn and to teach, to observe and to fulfil all the words of God's law' is the Jew's ideal of duty. Practice falls into two departments, ethics and ritual ordinances.

<sup>1</sup> Is. 44 : 6.

Like Jewish theology, Jewish ethics is admirable for its sweet reasonableness. The duties to our fellow-men, enjoined in the Bible, do not exalt poverty into virtue nor brand wealth as a vice. Our Scriptures do not teach that it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Wealth is regarded as a blessing of God, provided it be honestly acquired and wisely used—neither hoarded in miserly fashion, nor riotously squandered, but employed for our good and that of our fellow-men. We are not told that before we are worthy to be of the elect, we must divest ourselves of our possessions and give away all that we have. We are, however, commanded to share the prosperity God has bestowed upon us with those less fortunate; a tithe of our income must be given to the poor. Our Bible does not command us, when struck on one cheek, to turn the other to the smiter. But we are exhorted not to bear a grudge, not to hate our brother in our heart, and to remember that the wrongdoer, too, is our brother. Justice is to be tempered with mercy. Especially is loving-kindness to be extended to the friendless and forlorn, the fatherless, the widow, the destitute, the stranger.

Jewish theology and ethics are of a universal character and intended for all mankind. But the ritual ordinances of our faith are for the Jew alone. The Gentile world is exempt from their obligation. For this reason, and also because the environment in which the Jew finds himself in

the Dispersion is antagonistic to their observance, there is need to lay special stress on this part of Judaism.

The Sedrah of this morning, after concluding the account of Israel's slavery in Egypt and his miraculous deliverance, sets forth not theological doctrines or moral principles, but rites and ceremonies. It enjoins us to observe the Passover, redeem the first-born, and put on *Tephillin*. What is the purpose of these and similar institutions? The observance of Sabbath and Festival, Passover, and the Day of Atonement, the fixing of a *Mezuzah* on our door, the wearing of *Tzitzith* and *Tephillin* do not affect the Supreme, but are of infinite moment to ourselves. The object of these commands is our discipline, our purification, our sanctification. And how admirably these functions are discharged!

Let me deal briefly with one rite, that of *Tephillin*. There are two references to this precept. In the last section of the weekly portion it is said, 'It shall be a sign upon thy hand and a memorial between thine eyes, that the law of God shall be in thy mouth.'<sup>1</sup> And again the last verse of the Sedrah reads: 'It shall be for a token upon thy hand and for frontlets between thine eyes, for by strength of hand God brought us forth from Egypt.'<sup>2</sup> What a wealth of beautiful symbolic meaning clusters round this rite! The word *Tephillin* is the plural of *Tephillah*, and means Meditation. The *Tephillin* are called אֹת, a sign of the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 13 : 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 13 : 16.

Covenant between God and His people, טטפת, an ornament, for which Ezekiel employs as a synonym the word פאר, Glory. The Greek translation is *Phylacteria*, protectors and defences against mischief. The four passages of the Pentateuch contained in the *Tephillin* set forth God's unity and His providence, and recall Israel's lowly origin and exalted destiny as the servant of God and witness to His truth. The first letter of the word *Shaddai*, the Almighty, embossed on the תפלה של ראש, impresses upon us, when we bind the *Tephillin* round our heads, that we are soldiers of the army of the Lord of Hosts. When we wind the thongs of the תפלה של יד round our arms, we repeat the text, 'And ye that cling to the Lord your God shall all of you live this day,'<sup>1</sup> for to cling to God is life in its highest form. When we wind the thongs round our fingers and hands, we recite the sentences from Hosea: 'And I betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness and in justice, and in loving-kindness and mercy; I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt love the Lord,'<sup>1</sup>—a beautiful assurance of the indissoluble union between God and the *Keneseth Israel*. And to this union, this all-embracing love of God for mankind and His special favour to Israel, our Rabbis possibly refer when they say that God showed Moses, when he stood in the cleft of the rock, the knot of the *Tephillin*. What importance our wise men attached to this rite! Rav Ada bar Ahavah was asked by his

<sup>1</sup> Hosea, 2 : 19-20.



disciples: 'By what merit hast thou attained long life?' And the teacher replied: 'I never walked four cubits without *Tephillin* or *Torah*.' He added: 'I never gave way to outbursts of temper, nor attempted to take precedence of my seniors, nor rejoiced at another's misfortune, nor called anyone by a nickname.'<sup>1</sup> Another dictum tells us: 'He who wears *Tephillin* and *Tzitzith*, reads the Shema and recites the prayers, may rest assured that he will have a portion in the world to come.' Abaia says: 'The fires of Gehinnom will not prevail against him.' Resh Lakish tells us that 'such a man will live long; for it is said: God is upon them; they will live.'<sup>2</sup>

These are not idle promises. Whoever fulfils this precept of *Tephillin*, not mechanically nor perfunctorily but in a spirit of true devotion, meditating on the significance of the rite, concentrating his mind on the Almighty's love for all His creatures and His goodness to His people, bending his will in subordination to the will of His Master, purifying his heart and mind, consecrating his thoughts, feelings, and activities to the services of His Maker, will surely be abundantly recompensed here and hereafter. The *Tephillin* will be true phylacteries, guardians and protectors against adverse influences, physical and spiritual. Gracious influences will descend upon him from on high. Holy sentiments and aspirations will fill his mind and heart. In the ardour of his love for God, the consuming flames of fierce passions, that are worse than fires of Gehinnom,

<sup>1</sup> Taanith, 20b; Megillah, 28a.

<sup>2</sup> Menachoth, 44a.



will be quenched. Those who lay *Tephillin* in the right spirit will live long, whether their years on earth are few or many. They will live long, for God is upon them ; their lives will be full of beauty and worth. And when they shall have passed away, their memory will continue fresh and fragrant in the hearts of their children, of their friends, of all whom they have influenced for good. They will live long, for they will have contributed to the progress of mankind onwards and upwards.

## HOME INFLUENCE.

NEWPORT (MON.) SYNAGOGUE, SEPTEMBER 5, 1908.

I DEEM it a great privilege to occupy this pulpit to-day. It recalls memories and associations dating back nearly a quarter of a century. Twenty-three years ago, when I commenced my ministry in a neighbouring town in this part of Great Britain, the Newport Congregation was already equipped with all requisite institutions, and by its efficient management and the unbroken harmony that prevailed among its members, served as an example to many a sister community, numerically and financially more important. It is a pleasure to learn that you have not gone back nor stood still, that, in the last twenty years, the membership of your synagogue has doubled. I am yet more delighted to observe that the cordiality which made of you one happy family is maintained, and that, in this vital respect, you may still claim your old repute as a model congregation.

Pursuing, as you do, the even tenor of your ways, unvexed by communal problems, happily free from stormy crises, my mind was somewhat exercised as

to the topic on which I should address you. The season certainly calls for serious thought. Our wise men point out that exactly one hundred and twenty days intervene between the Feast of Pentecost and the Day of Atonement. This period of four months falls into equal divisions of forty days each : from the Feast of Shavuoth to the Fast of Tammuz ; thence to Rosh Chodesh Ellul ; and thence again to Kippur. Each of these periods is fraught with significance. On the sixth of Sivan, God made a covenant with Israel, who solemnly promised : ‘ Whatever the Eternal commandeth, that will we do and obey.’ Quickly was the promise forgotten and broken. On the seventeenth of Tammuz, Moses descended from the Mount, and finding that the people had reverted to the worship of Apis, the Egyptian bull-god, shattered the tables of stone on which the Divine commandments had been inscribed, and of which the nation had shown itself unworthy. Yet the heart of the leader yearned for those he had delivered, and for forty days and forty nights he wrestled in prayer on their behalf. His prayer was heard. On the first of Ellul he was bidden to ascend Sinai once more to receive anew the Decalogue. He stayed on the Mount forty days. On the tenth of Tishri he brought back the blessed message, סלחתי ‘ I have forgiven.’ Ever since, the tenth of Tishri has been the holiest day in the Jewish year. And the preceding ten days that usher in the New Year, together with the whole of Ellul, form a period of introspection and retrospection,

self-examination and heart-searching, a period of earnest preparation for the most sacred day of days, on which we prostrate ourselves at the foot of the throne of Divine grace and pour out our hearts before the Father of Mercies in contrition, confession and repentance, when we in return receive the blessed assurance of Divine forgiveness and hear the blessed word סלחתי.

To mark the importance of this season, the Shofar is sounded, arousing the sleepers, awaking the slumberers, stirring the sluggish, and calling all Israelites to their duty and their God.

What theme is of sufficient gravity befitting the character of this month? What theme is, at the same time, sufficiently practical that its treatment will leave, one may hope, an impression that is not fleeting and evanescent, but lasting and permanent? One note there is which should call forth a responsive echo in your hearts. One subject is of perennial interest—religious education. Of all topics, this is, indeed, the most momentous. It lies at the very root of our religion. When our forefathers stood at the base of Sinai, they were asked, our wise men say, for a pledge that the faith entrusted to them would be safe in their keeping, jealously guarded and lovingly cherished. They pointed to the patriarchs—Abraham, the friend of God, the first teacher of monotheism, his son, who was bound on the altar for sacrifice, his grandson, the simple man dwelling in tents, the gentle shepherd and herdsman. But it was rejoined that noble sires

sometimes have degenerate descendants. Our forefathers then solemnly promised to give special heed to their children's religious training. And this promise was accepted as an all-sufficient guarantee for the safety of the Divine treasure entrusted to man.

The fulfilment of this pledge, to train the young in the fear of God and the observance of His commandments, devolves primarily upon parents. 'Thou shalt teach them (the commandments of God) diligently to thy children.' The obligation rests upon the parents because they have their children continuously with them. 'Thou shalt speak of the commandments when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, when thou risest up.' In the evening before retiring to repose, in the morning before leaving the house, ay, whenever we are with our little ones, within the home or outside it, we should use the opportunity for training them religiously. Of all ages, childhood is the most impressionable, 'like wax to receive, like marble to retain.' Of all influences, the most potent and enduring are those of parents. Much that we learn, we soon forget. But the simple prayer taught at the mother's knee, the words of counsel uttered by the father's lips, are recalled with the last breath.

Do you, fathers and mothers, realize your responsibility to the little ones with whom God has blessed you? Your privilege it is to mould their characters, to watch over their spiritual growth. Your duty it is to implant in their young hearts piety and moral

principles, to sow seeds that will in due season bring forth a rich harvest of noble and exemplary lives.

What is it that you can specifically do? You have well-organized and efficiently-conducted Hebrew and religion classes, which, I am glad to learn, your children attend regularly and punctually. That is good as far as it goes; but does it go far enough? Something more may surely be expected. I would ask you to second the teachers' efforts, by exhibiting a keen and intelligent personal interest in the progress your offspring are making in their religious no less than in their secular studies. Some may reply that they are not competent to supervise their children's education. Well, make yourselves competent. You haven't the time? You are busy the whole week earning bread for the bairns? But what of Friday evenings, Sabbaths and Sundays? What more profitable way of spending an hour of your leisure than to open Prayer Book, Pentateuch, Bible, and revise with your children the work they have been doing during the week? This would be no startling innovation. It would simply be a revival of an institution with which an earlier generation was familiar under the designation of the weekly *Verhören*. You will be surprised to find how the adoption of this method will quicken your children's interest in their sacred studies and accelerate their progress.

There is another way in which you should discharge your responsibility to your offspring. Learning is not everything. Study is but a means to an end, the path to a goal. And that goal is practice. Before



reciting the Shema in the morning, we first thank God for the glorious orb of day, whose rays fill the earth with light and warmth, brightness and cheerfulness. Then we express our gratitude for the still more glorious luminary, the Torah. And we pray: 'Put it into our hearts to comprehend, and understand, to hear, learn, teach, observe, do, and fulfil all the words of Thy Law in love.' The object of understanding, hearing, learning, teaching is observance. Teachers can, at best, only impart theoretical instruction. The essential supplement of practical teaching must be provided by the parents. There is little use in a child learning the Shema at school unless mother and father see to it that in the evening, before it closes its eyes, and in the morning, when it awakens to new life and vigour, it recites the declaration of God's unity, Israel's watchword, for which our race has endured so much travail. The best method of familiarizing older children with our sublime liturgy is by accustoming them to regular attendance at public worship, not sending them to synagogue, but taking them there.

I fully realize the difficulty in the case of parents who go to business on what should be the day of rest. Sabbath desecration is not merely a formidable obstacle to the religious training of the rising generation. It is the cause of much besides that is perilous in the condition of latter-day Judaism. Still, if some co-religionists unfortunately deem themselves precluded by business exigencies from the strict observance of the divinely appointed Day of Rest, this dereliction

of duty should not lead to further laxity. For their children's sake, parents should strive to observe other institutions of Judaism all the more strictly. The breach of the Fourth Commandment is not to be condoned. But while the heart is not hardened and the mind has not become quite callous, so long as the conscience is still tender, recognizes and regrets wrongdoing, there is no ground for apprehending that children will become quite indifferent to the claims of race and religion. On the contrary, what scientists term reversion to the ancestral type may take place. There may be a throw-back, and the children, when they grow up, may unconsciously copy their grandparents and be stricter Jews and Jewesses than their fathers and mothers—but on one condition, that parents themselves do not snap the link that binds them to the past, that the home influence is good, the home atmosphere Jewish. Earnestly strive, therefore, to write on the tablets of your children's hearts the love of God and loyalty to His law.

Set your children, likewise, a good example in the counting-house, shop, warehouse, and market-place. Do not merely train them in the practice of the rites which bring man into closer communion with his Maker. Teach them also those principles of truth, justice, mercy and love which knit God's children into one brotherhood. What a wealth of ethical exhortations do we not find in this morning's Sedrah. At its close we are warned against unjust weights and measures.<sup>1</sup> Earlier we are

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 25 : 13-16.

bidden, in pathetic language, not to oppress the labourer, not to withhold his just wage. 'At his day shalt thou give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it, lest he cry against thee unto the Lord and it be sin unto thee.'<sup>1</sup>

We are not greedily to keep God's bounty for ourselves. The farmer had to set apart the corner of the field for the poor, who were to be permitted to follow the reaper and take the forgotten sheaf and the gleanings. We are to be helpful to all, raise our neighbour's ox or ass that has fallen by the way, restore the lost property which we have found to the rightful owner. Guide your lives by the light of the principles enunciated in these texts and show that Judaism is an ethical as well as a doctrinal and institutional system, that in Judaism conduct is three-quarters of life. Inculcate, by your example, in your children love of God and love of Judaism, a sense of justice to equals, tenderness towards dependents, pity for the weak, helpfulness for the helpless, love for all God's creatures. Conscientiously redeem your pledge to train your offspring in the right path, and you may confidently cherish the hope that God will fulfil His promise: 'This is My Covenant, saith the Lord, My spirit which is upon thee, and the words which I have put into thy mouth shall not depart from thy mouth, nor from thy children's mouth, nor from the mouths of thy children's children from now and for evermore.'

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 24 : 15.

## THE FATHER'S RECOMPENSE.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, JANUARY 5, 1901.

THE concluding chapters of Genesis narrate the closing scenes in the career of the third patriarch. An eventful life was his, chequered with vicissitudes. The incidents in his biography, that stand out like rugged peaks, are his precipitate flight from his brother's vengeance ; his lengthy and toilsome exile in his uncle's home ; his anxieties on his homeward journey on account of his daughter ; his heartrending grief for the supposed death of his favourite son.

Not wholly without justification was his seemingly querulous reply to Pharaoh's kindly inquiry as to his age : ' Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.'<sup>1</sup> The prediction unconsciously implied in the continuation of the answer : ' They have not reached the days of the years of my fathers' lives,'<sup>2</sup> was, alas, realized. While Abraham lived one hundred and seventy-five years, and Isaac exceeded that limit by five years, Jacob was a hundred and thirty years old when he stood before the king of Egypt, and only survived another seventeen years. But what a rich recompense were those last

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 47 : 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

seventeen years for the sorrow-laden period that preceded them. Those blissful days, in their calm placidity and absolute freedom from carking cares, resembled a long, golden summer afternoon which follows a storm-swept day, and itself gradually, imperceptibly, and all too swiftly melts into the dark, silent night. During the evening of his life the patriarch was relieved of sordid anxieties concerning his material wants. His daily bread he received from the loving hands of his son, and to be maintained by him was certainly no degradation to the father.

Without the least loss of self-respect, he might show deference and even do homage to his benefactor, for was not Joseph Viceroy of Egypt? He prepares to yield up his spirit, in fullest reliance on Joseph's solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that his remains would not be suffered to rest in alien soil, there to be worshipped by the superstitious Egyptian as holy relics, but would be borne to *sancta terra*, to the ancestral sepulchre, the exclusive right to which he had, according to tradition, acquired by the payment of a large sum of money to his twin-brother.

Jacob's principal reward, however, was not his freedom from material anxieties during his lifetime, nor the assurance, in his last moments, that his earthly remains would be interred in the cave of Machpelah. His chief recompense was his children's lives and characters, wherein his good fortune exceeded that of his fathers. Only one of the two sons of the first teacher of monotheism continued

his life's work; the other was a wild man 'whose hand was against everyone and everyone's hand against him.' Of the second patriarch's twin children, the depraved conduct of the father's favourite aged him with grief and dimmed his vision, for Esau became chief of a robber band to whom the only appropriate benediction was, 'By thy sword shalt thou live.' Jacob, on the other hand, is blessed with twelve sons, all worthy of their sire, all deserving the noble designation, *שנים עשר שבטי יה*, 'founders of the twelve tribes of God.'

His beloved wife's first-born is torn from him at an impressionable age. But cruel circumstances, that might have embittered, and alien influences that would have warped, a less noble nature, do not destroy the deep piety, the strong sense of justice, the spirit of gentleness which the slave, elevated from a dungeon to a palace, had learnt from his father. Joseph's own sons are trained as he himself had been trained; Ephraim and Manasseh—ancestors respectively of Joshua, the conqueror of Palestine, and of Gideon, Israel's emancipator from the cruel yoke of Midian—are deemed worthy of being included with Reuben and Simeon among the tribes of the Holy Nation.

This supreme blessing of good children is finely indicated in the ancient rabbinical paraphrases of the lesson for this Sabbath. When Jacob felt his end approaching, he gathered his sons about his couch; his desire, in his last hour, was to lift the veil of the future and reveal his race's final destiny. At the critical moment, the patriarch's



supernatural gifts failed him ; the seer's spiritual sight became blurred and obscured. His purpose was out of harmony with the Divine plan. The aged prophet's heart misgave him. 'Are any of my sons unworthy of the Divine grace?' he asked himself. 'Do they cherish strange gods; secretly approve of their uncle's lust of blood, and their grand-uncle's lawlessness?' 'Gather yourselves together,' he exhorts his children. 'Rally your spiritual forces, summon your moral energies. Cleanse your minds; purify your hearts.' The twelve sons understand the covert rebuke, and with one accord they exclaim: 'Hear, O our father Israel, the Lord our God is one God. The God you worship we adore. Your faith is our faith. Your hopes are our hopes. Your aims, aspirations, and ideals are ours too.' And the patriarch, reassured that his sons' hearts beat in unison with his, in his gratitude, utters the sentence which, ever since, has formed the complement to the Shema. 'Blessed be the name of His glorious Sovereignty for ever and ever.'<sup>1</sup>

The patriarch is not afraid to mingle rebuke with eulogy. Reuben's infirmity of purpose loses him the double crown of kingship and priesthood, as well as the first-born's right to a double portion of the heritage. The mischief occasioned by Simeon and Levi's turbulent dispositions will be checked by the dispersion of these tribes. And tradition reports that, as Simeon's territory was exceedingly limited, the

<sup>1</sup> Pesachim, 56a.

members of that tribe were, in fact, compelled to eke out a scanty livelihood by acting as teachers to their more fortunately circumstanced brethren. The Levites, too, roamed through the land collecting their tithes from threshing-floor and sheepfold. Dependent on the goodwill of their neighbours, pride was humbled, hot passion cooled.

After addressing the tribes individually, they are blessed collectively. 'And this is it that their fathers spake unto *them* and blessed *them*.'<sup>1</sup> A lesson, apparently trite, and yet one that cannot be repeated too often, that all advantages are but Dead Sea fruit, turning to ashes in the mouth, unless they are accompanied by the supreme blessings of unity and harmony, the sense of kinship, brotherly sympathy, the resolve that the benefits possessed by each shall be shared by all.

Jacob not only blessed his children. His life was a blessing to his neighbours as well as to his family. During his stay in Egypt, there was no recurrence of the terrible scourge that had not even spared the granary of ancient times. To use the oriental trope, the Nile rose to greet the good man, and irrigated the Delta's length and breadth with fructifying streams. Nor, despite his protracted absence, had he been forgotten in his homeland. At the threshing-floor of Atad, Canaan's princes doffed their crowns, placed them on the points of their spears, and formed a guard of honour round the remains of their old friend. The presence of the illustrious dead was the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 49 : 28.

signal for a truce to strife and combat ; earthly dignities, principalities, and powers, and the differences and jealousies they engender, were temporarily in abeyance.

With a flash of true poetic insight, our sages say that Jacob did not really die.<sup>1</sup> Superfluous were the delicate and costly processes of embalming. Dust indeed returned to dust ; but the patriarch's spirit lived on in his children and children's children ; lives in the Jewish people and blesses it to the present day.

How is Jacob's spirit to be perpetuated ? How else but by imitating his quiet, unassuming methods ; looking well to the ways of our households ; recognizing that our first duty is to the inmates of our homes. The most important factor in the moral development of the young is home training and home influence. Where the atmosphere of the home is Jewish ; where the table is an altar before the Lord ; where parents realize their sacred, unique privilege as ministers, guides, teachers to their children, and set them an example of uprightness and integrity ; exhibit a spirit of genuine religion and unostentatious piety ; show that Sabbaths, festivals, and the beautiful observances of our faith are indeed a delight to them ; they may rest assured that their descendants will unconsciously become imbued with the conviction that 'the chiefest wisdom is fear of the Lord,' and, in their turn, will grow up 'a seed blessed of the Eternal.'

<sup>1</sup> Taanith, 5b.

But for the intelligent practice of Judaism, knowledge, as well as example, is needed. The first petition in the daily Amidah is for grace of understanding. The synagogue has, accordingly, for a long time past, not merely served as a meeting-house for worship, but has also, literally been a *Schule*, a school where the rudiments of religious instruction are imparted.

The present system of education exhibits, however, one defect. It is incomplete. When our children attain *Bar Mitzvah*, parents, taking the formula *ברוך שפטרני מענשו של זה* in too wide a sense, consider themselves exempted from all further responsibility for their boys' religious training. The lad, too, called, for the first time, to the reading of the Law, often regards that honour as emancipating him from the status of pupilage. What are the consequences? When the children grow up, the old legend receives a fresh application. The angel of oblivion seems to have touched them a second time on their lips and made them forget almost all the scant Hebrew and religious knowledge toilsomely acquired by them in childhood.

The mischief is obvious ; the remedy, equally clear. The gap between the child's religion class and the adult's study circle should be filled by advanced classes where, during the critical period of adolescence—those all-important years of growth and development—the minds and hearts of the rising generation shall continue to be carefully nurtured, so that their future lives and characters may resemble, not fields

cultivated for a short interval and then neglected and suffered to be overrun with noxious weeds, but well-tended gardens blossoming like the rose, and fragrant as the myrtle.

‘The reader of the letter should execute its message.’ It is proposed to establish in connection with this synagogue continuation classes, which will not, however, be restricted to the children of the members. The only stipulations insisted upon will be regular and punctual attendance on the part of those who join, an earnest desire to learn, and a spirit of reverence. With these requisites, God’s grace will rest on the work which, it is hoped, will help to promote the true spiritual welfare of the descendants of Israel, and further the advancement of our holy faith.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE SYNAGOGUE.

FINSBURY PARK SYNAGOGUE, OCTOBER 12, 1901.

I GLADLY welcome the opportunity accorded me, on the first Sabbath after the Festivals, of heartily congratulating the entire congregation—leaders as well as rank and file—on the successful accomplishment of an arduous and difficult undertaking—the erection of a sanctuary to the service of the Most High.

What a crowd of memories and associations cluster around the conception of a Jewish sanctuary! For the first use of the term we must go back to the dawn of Israel's history. Three thousand years ago, when our forefathers were redeemed from their long Egyptian servitude and had safely emerged from the perils of the deep, they sang a song of gratitude for their marvellous deliverance. In that song the following notable sentence occurs:<sup>1</sup> **זֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, which is variously rendered: 'This is my God and I will glorify Him,' or 'This is my God and I will build a habitation for Him,' or combining both versions, 'This is my God and I will build Him a glorious habitation.' Speedily was the promise fulfilled. Scarcely a twelve-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 15 : 2.



month had elapsed when, on the first day of the first month in the second year after the Exodus, a tabernacle was erected in the wilderness, a visible token of God's presence in Israel's midst. On that occasion, Moses, according to tradition, offered up a prayer which we can always appropriately repeat : ' May it be the will of the Supreme to cause His Shechinah to rest on the work of your hands.' To this should be added the High Priest's petition : ' May it be His will to cause the spirit of brotherhood and love, friendship and peace to abide with you from now and for evermore.'

On the second day of the recent feast of Tabernacles, and again on the Eighth Day, we read, as lessons from the Prophets, selections from the book of Kings, descriptive of the festivities in Jerusalem, which celebrated the dedication of the First Temple.

The place occupied, and the functions fulfilled, by the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in Jerusalem, the synagogue occupies and discharges at the present day, in the lands of our dispersion. Like the sanctuary of old, the synagogue is a house of prayer, and should be a rallying-centre for Jews and Judaism. As in the Tabernacle and Temple a perpetual fire was kindled on the altar, so here too the fire of spiritual fervour should be tended, so that it may continually burn with a pure, bright, and steady glow.

In Judaism there are no mysteries ; there is nothing in our ritual that we need conceal, or of which we need be ashamed. Our people, therefore never, except under the stress of active persecution, worshipped

in catacombs, crypts, or subterranean halls. Our synagogues have always had windows and have always been flooded with light. To them applies the invocation: 'Open, ye gates, and let the righteous nation that keeps faithfulness, enter,' or, 'Open, ye gates, and let the **גוי צדיק**, the righteous Gentile whose motive is pure and sincere, enter.' To all, without distinction of race or creed, the synagogue extends a hearty welcome. All it greets with the familiar Jewish invitation, 'Blessed be he who comes in the name of God.'

But if the synagogue is open to all, does it not behove us to keep watch and ward over our attitude and demeanour, over our behaviour and conduct, when we wend our way to the house of God, and while we are there? Do not take it ill, if I impress upon you the importance of not only attending regularly, but also of arriving at the commencement of the service. The practice that has grown up, in several congregations, of permitting members to stroll in and out at their own sweet will, while public worship is proceeding, has no counterpart, and would not be tolerated, in church or chapel, and must not be permitted to obtain a footing in a newly erected synagogue. And while you are here, not only observe decorum but cultivate also devotion. Remember that the place on which you stand is holy ground: 'This is none other but the house of God, and this the gate to Heaven.'<sup>1</sup> Over the ark, in several Jewish places of prayer, is inscribed the solemn monition, which I would ask you to bear in mind,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 28 : 17.

‘ Know before Whom thou standest.’ While the Temple on Mount Zion was still in existence, pilgrims were not permitted to ascend the hill leading to the shrine with shoes on their feet, staves in their hands, or purses in their wallets.<sup>1</sup> Let me entreat you to observe the spirit of this rule. Before you cross the threshold of this minor sanctuary, shake off the dust of the street ; leave worldly thoughts outside. Forget, for the time, your personal importance, whether it be due to wealth or position. Let your hearts be uplifted by the thought of God’s infinite greatness. Let your eyes look down towards the ground when you reflect upon your own utter insignificance.

One other error I would warn you against. Do not think that the whole duty of a Jew is completed when he has assisted in the building and maintenance of a synagogue, and even when he joins regularly, punctually and devoutly in public worship. The synagogue will have utterly failed of its purpose if you do not carry away its holy influence, to sanctify and bless your homes, your vocations, and the whole of your lives. Your dwelling-houses, on the doorposts of which *Mezuzahs* are fixed, with the name שרי, Almighty God, exposed to view, shall be temples of holiness. Your tables shall be tables before the Lord ; your meals, sacrifices ; and you yourselves, officiating priests who, by the silent eloquence of your example, shall teach your children the nobility of duty. Not only solemn religious rites, but every act, however

<sup>1</sup> Mishnah, Berachoth, 9 : 5.

humble, apparently insignificant and commonplace, shall be sanctified and raised to the dignity of a *Mitzvah* by the spirit in which it is performed and the motive that inspires its performance—the greater glory of God—and so the whole of your lives will be one continuous consecrated service.

Sanctify the name of God not only in the synagogue and the home, but also in the market-place, the factory, and the counting-house, by the strictest integrity and uprightness, by the refusal to take any unfair advantage—whatever be the temptation—in the relations of master and workman, employer and employed, customer and competitor. So will you justify the prophet's lofty claim on our behalf: 'The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and speak no falsehood.'

This morning we again commenced to read the Torah. Rashi, in his commentary on the first verse of the Pentateuch, points out that the Law does not begin with the twelfth chapter of Exodus, which contains the first ordinance addressed to the Israelites as a nation—the institution of the paschal sacrifice. The first chapter of Genesis commences with a description of the marvels of creation. The first lesson of religion which we should never forget is that the dome of sapphire above our heads, the pavement of emerald beneath our feet, the lamps of purest ray serene set in the sky, the countless objects of beauty and utility which we see around us, are not the results of accident. They were all called into being by the will

of an All-wise, All-good, Omnipotent Creator and Ruler, our Heavenly Father, Whose desire is our improvement and happiness, and to Whom we are accountable for the use we make of our existence, and for the way in which we deal with each other. The order and beauty in the universe is a perpetual exhortation to us to cultivate moral order and spiritual beauty in our lives.

‘The just man is the foundation of the world.’ For the sake of Israel and the Torah, for the sake of the fulfilment of the Law and the practice of religion and morality, were Heaven and earth created.

Let the Torah be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Let us cling to it as to a tree of life, and find our happiness in its maintenance ; so will its ways be ways of pleasantness, and all its paths be peace.

## THE STUDY OF THE TORAH.

OPENING OF THE LEEDS BETH HAMEDRASH, MARCH 23, 1908.

UNDENIABLY valuable and important as are the functions of the synagogue—the rallying-centre of Judaism and Jewry, the counterpart of the ancient Temple, the minor sanctuary where the individual pours out his soul at the foot of the Throne of Divine Grace and joins his praises and petitions to those of the entire community—they are transcended by those of the Beth Hamedrash. Hence, on the principle that objects employed in the service of religion may be raised to higher, not degraded to lower, uses, it is laid down in the Schulchan Aruch, on the authority of a passage in the Talmud,<sup>1</sup> that a public synagogue may be converted into a Beth Hamedrash, but not *vice versâ*, and it is further expressly stated that a Beth Hamedrash is more sacred than a synagogue.

These dicta reflect the spirit of Judaism, which has always emphatically insisted on the necessity of cultivating the intellect equally with the heart, and developing the mental faculties as well as stimulating the emotions in the service of God. In the Shema,

<sup>1</sup> Megillah, 26b, 27a.



repeated twice daily, we are exhorted : ‘ These words which I command thee this day shall be upon thy heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.’ This duty is not relegated to a section of the people, for in Judaism there is no division between clergy and laity, between the professional classes and men of affairs. ‘ This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, and thou shalt meditate therein day and night,’<sup>1</sup> was addressed to a soldier, the commander-in-chief of Israel’s forces, who led the descendants of the liberated serfs to the Promised Land and helped them to conquer Palestine. The Psalms, which sound the entire gamut of human emotions, and in which the varying moods that sway human nature—passionate joy and poignant grief, quaking fear and confident hope, profound despair and high-souled courage—all find adequate expression, begin with felicitations to him ‘ who delights in the law of God and on His law meditates day and night.’ In the nineteenth Psalm, the sweet singer of Israel passes from a magnificent account of the revelation in Nature to the nobler, because more explicit, revelation in the Divine Word, and bursts forth into the rhapsody : ‘ The law of God is perfect, restoring the soul ; the testimony of God is faithful, making the simple wise ; the ordinances of God are right,

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 1 : 8.

rejoicing the heart; the commandment of God is clear, making the eyes bright; the fear of God is pure, enduring for ever; the judgments of God are true, altogether righteous.’<sup>1</sup>

If we turn to the Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash, we find that they lay still greater stress upon the duty of studying the Torah. In the familiar passage from Mishnah *Peah*, a list of duties is enumerated, the performance of which will secure recompense here and bliss hereafter. Honouring parents and practical benevolence in its various forms—hospitality to the wayfarer, visitation of the sick, dowering the bride, showing the last respects to the departed—are named, and the passage concludes: ‘The study of the Law is equal to them all,’ or more correctly ‘corresponds to them all.’ For two and a half years, we read, the schools of Shammai and Hillel debated as to which was the more important—study or practice: and the final decision was, ‘Great is study, because it leads to right practice.’ There is a beautiful allegory in the Talmud, that when our ancestors stood at the foot of Sinai, the Eternal held the mountains over them, like an upturned cask, and said: ‘If you accept the Torah, well and good. If not, here will be your burial place.’<sup>2</sup> The meaning is that the whole *raison d’être* of the Jewish people, the sole justification for our separatism, is that we are depositaries of the Torah. The wealth accumulated by individual members of our race is not a tower of strength to the Jewish people.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 19 : 7–8.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbath, 88a.

Nor are even the solid contributions to science, literature, art, politics, made by Israel's sons, set down to the credit of the stock whence they have sprung. But readily or reluctantly, eagerly or grudgingly, foes as well as friends are bound to acknowledge the infinitely valuable services which the Hebrew race has rendered in the sphere of religion; and no one can help admitting that the advance of the civilized world in humanity and morality, purity and kindness is directly and indirectly due to the influence of our sacred literature. But we must not rest on our laurels. The main duty of the people of the Book is to preserve the Book, and perpetuate the knowledge and practice of the glorious literature which has developed from it. This duty devolves upon all, rich and poor, as is beautifully set forth in the following Talmudic passage :<sup>1</sup>

When an Israelite, after the close of his earthly pilgrimage, will stand at the bar of Heavenly Judgment, and on being asked, 'Why hast thou neglected the study of the Torah,' will reply, 'Because I was poor,' he will be met with the retort, 'Wast thou then poorer than Hillel?' That student's wages were but half a *dinar* a day, of which small sum he gave half to the porter of the college for the right of admission. One day he had earned nothing. As he could not hand the janitor the customary gratuity, Hillel clambered to the roof of the college, pressed down his ear to the skylight, so as not to miss a single syllable of the 'words of the living God,' expounded by Shemaiah and Abtalion.

<sup>1</sup> Yoma, 35b.

It was a short Friday afternoon in the mid-winter month of Tebeth. There was a heavy snowstorm. The next day, when the Sabbath morn had dawned, She-maiah said to his colleague, 'Brother Abtalion, usually in the early morning the hall is flooded with light ; to-day it is exceptionally dark.' They looked up and saw the figure of a man athwart the skylight. They immediately mounted to the roof, swept away the mass of snow that had covered the student to a depth of three cubits, tenderly brought down his almost inanimate form, and, notwithstanding that it was the Day of Rest, prepared a hot bath, kindled a fire, and so saved Hillel's life.

This incident is not unique. It is a typical illustration of the sacrifices that have frequently been brought on the altar of the Torah. Enthusiasm for sacred learning lived in Hillel's descendants and disciples. It inspired Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai, at the destruction of Jerusalem and downfall of the Jewish State, to ask as a boon from the Roman General and Emperor, Vespasian, that he might spare Jamnia and its teachers. It emboldened the martyr, R. Akiba, to gather assemblies in defiance of Hadrian's edict and teach them Torah. It determined R. Jehudah the Prince and friend of princes to undertake the laborious task of compiling that marvellous Encyclopædia of oral law and tradition, the Mishnah. This zeal for Torah travelled to Babylon and was the abiding inspiration of the schools of Sura and Pumbeditha from the days of Rav, founder of the former

academy, to those of Ravina and Rav Ashi, who compiled the Babylonian Talmud, and later on to the close of the Gaonic period. It winged its flight across the Mediterranean to Western Europe and North Africa. Hence the galaxy of scholars in Spain and Egypt—Alfasi, Maimonides, Nachmanides. It spread northwards, and the glossators on the Talmud in France and England, by their marvellously acute critical notes, opened a new path in Talmudic study. This spirit inspired the teachers in Germany: R. Elazar of Worms, author of the 'Rokeach'; R. Judah Chassid, whose sweetness and kindliness are abundantly manifest in his 'Book of the Pious'; R. Meir of Rothenburg, who languished in prison, till his death, because he would not permit ransom to be paid for him, so as not to encourage the rapacity of German robber-barons and tyrant-princes. The same spirit has animated thousands and tens of thousands of students in Russian Poland and Lithuania, Galicia and Hungary, who turn night into day in their devotion to Jewish scholarship.

There was a current gibe: 'The Torah is not on the other side of the sea. It has no representatives on this side of the English Channel.' The gibe was never quite true. In the last generation it has completely lost its point. The persecutions in Russia in the last thirty years brought thousands of co-religionists from that step-motherly country to these hospitable shores. Many settled in the Metropolis. Of those who went to the provinces, a large number came to Leeds and brought



with them their traditional love of learning. They recognized that public worship was not the sole requisite of a community, that religious instruction was as necessary for young and old as devotion in prayer. The settlers in Leeds who started a Beth Hamedrash in a small room in Templar Street in the early 'seventies had, owing to increasing numbers, to remove successively to St. Alban's Street in 1877, to Upper Hope Street in 1886, and to premises occupied in 1895, and only recently vacated. In 1901 it was felt that the ship must have a captain, and a call was given to the distinguished and venerable scholar whose presence in Leeds confers honour not only upon the congregation to which he ministers, but on the entire Jewish community.

If we dwell for a few minutes upon the useful work performed by the Beth Hamedrash, it is to enlighten the visitors, and induce communities in other large centres to take a leaf out of your book.

The Beth Hamedrash is open for seventeen hours daily, from 6 in the morning till 11 at night. As soon as the doors are unlocked, the rooms are filled with working men, who, before going to their tasks, begin the day as it should be begun, with a service of praise and prayer to Him Who restores vigour and vitality to the weary and toilworn. At noon, released from the factories for the midday meal, many turn into the Beth Hamedrash for a few minutes' spiritual refreshment. In the evenings, the rooms are thronged with those who realize that for complete development, intellectual is as much a necessity as



physical exercise ; that, if we are not to sink to the level of the brute, the mind and soul must be nourished as well as the body. Classes in Talmud are held by your minister every evening. In an adjoining room, there are regular readings in Bible, Mishnah, and Schulchan Aruch. In the lecture hall, Rabbis and preachers who visit Leeds frequently give religious addresses to large audiences.

The features of the old Beth Hamedrash will be continued in the new. But there is a distinction. The old Beth Hamedrash was an *old* Beth Hamedrash, dingy, cramped, incommodious, and, from an architectural point of view, far from ornamental. The new Beth Hamedrash will be one of the finest communal edifices in Leeds,—a palace of truth, fit habitation for that beauteous queen, the Torah, whose worth is above rubies.

A stately building with suitable fittings necessarily involves a large outlay. The amount received from the Leeds Corporation, under the award of Sir Hugh Owen, the arbitrator, will fall short of the cost of the new Beth Hamedrash by between two and three thousand pounds. This heavy liability must necessarily clog and hamper development, and I hope that you will soon be enabled to clear off, if not the whole, at all events a large portion of this debt. Though scattered and dispersed in the provinces of this kingdom, we are one people ; and, on the ground of this essential unity of Israel, I make an earnest appeal to the Jews of Leeds, of other provincial towns, and

even of the Metropolis—overwhelmed though it is with its own perplexing problems—to come to the help of the Leeds Beth Hamedrash. All cannot profitably pore over the folios of the Talmud or follow intelligently the discussions of the Mishnah; but all can, and should, encourage Jewish learning, which is the salt and savour of Judaism and Jewry. Many, I trust, will, by their assistance, show that they realize that the Torah is a tree of life, not only to those who learn it, but also to those who maintain and support its study.

## JEWISH JUDICIAL PROCEDURE IN ANCIENT TIMES.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, SEPTEMBER 1, 1900.

### I.

AMONG current fallacies, none is more common than the contrast drawn between Religion and Morality. This usually takes the form of a disparaging criticism of one's neighbour. The remark is often made: 'So-and-so may be a good Jew, but he is certainly not a good man. He is scrupulous in the observance of his duties to the Almighty; but he is not equally regardful of the obligations which he owes to his fellows. Pious he may be, but he lacks trustworthiness and reliability.' Such criticisms, it is submitted, involve a contradiction in terms. No one deserves the designation of good Jew, unless he is, at the same time, a good man. We cannot be said to fulfil our duties to God, unless we strive, with might and main, to carry out conscientiously those duties to our neighbour which God has imposed upon us equally with our duties to Himself. For religion is not the antithesis of morality, but includes it. This truth finds a splendid illustration in the three verses with which

the Sedrah of this morning opens : ‘ Judges and officers thou shalt appoint unto thyself in all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth unto thee according to thy tribes ; and they shall judge the people with a righteous judgment. Thou shalt not pervert justice ; thou shalt not show partiality ; nor shalt thou take bribes, for a bribe blindeth the eyes of the wise and perverteth the words of the just. Justice, justice thou shalt pursue in order that thou mayest live and possess the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.’<sup>1</sup> Here, as in so many other passages of the Bible, righteousness and equity are indicated as the sole basis on which the security of the State and the prosperity of its individual members can be firmly and safely established. We Jews claim the quality of mercy. We are said to be *Rachmonim b’ne Rachmonim*. But Israel is gifted with an equally fine sense for *Justice*. Early in his history, he developed a system of jurisprudence and judicial procedure unsurpassed by any nation of antiquity, and that can bear favourable comparison with the most advanced legal systems of the present day. I propose to sketch briefly some of the principal points of Jewish judicial procedure in olden time, and to compare this ancient system with the English method, which may be taken as representing the highest standard of modern civilized practice.

## II.

‘ Judges and officers thou shalt appoint in all thy gates.’ In accordance with this injunction, every

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 16 : 18-20.

townlet in Judæa, however small and unimportant, had its court of three judges, who met at least twice every week, on Mondays and Thursdays, the ordinary market-days. In addition to these petty courts with which the whole land was dotted, there were twelve tribunals, one in the chief town of each tribal territory; and each of these comprised twenty-three expert judges. The highest court of all, the Supreme Court of Appeal, was the famous Sanhedrin, or Synhedrion, consisting of seventy-one members, which held a continuous session at Jerusalem, within the precincts of the Temple, in a hall known as the *Lishchath Haggazith*—‘the hall of hewn stones.’

Civil causes, affecting rights to property, are in this country usually brought before a judge or group of judges. Less frequently are such cases decided by a judge and jury. On the other hand, anyone accused of a criminal offence is tried by a judge and jury of his own peers. The judge directs the proceedings and lays down the law; the jury considers the facts and gives the verdict. On the whole, this system works well. But it is conceivable that a jury, which has in its hands the life and liberty of a human being, may sometimes be composed of ignorant and unintelligent folk, by no means qualified to weigh evidence and render a true verdict. In Judaism the rule was reversed. A tribunal of even three laymen was competent to decide in civil cases where questions of property were concerned. Criminal charges, however, came within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, or at least of one of the twelve tribal courts consisting of twenty-three

expert jurists. In English courts circumstantial evidence is admitted, for want of better. And many an innocent man has suffered unjust punishment, and sometimes even the extreme penalty of the law, because of an unfortunate concatenation of suspicious circumstances which pointed to the perpetration of a crime by the accused, evidence which, too late, was discovered to have been wrongly interpreted. Such a miscarriage of justice was impossible in Jewry, for only the direct testimony of eye-witnesses was accepted. Again, the evidence of one trustworthy witness is regarded in this country as sufficient. Not so in Jewish Law. As we read in this morning's portion : ' One witness shall not rise up to testify against a man. . . . By the mouth of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a matter be established.'<sup>1</sup> Before witnesses can be heard, they must in this country be sworn. And frequenters of the law-courts have the opportunity of observing how perfunctorily the oath is sometimes administered. The Jew had too much reverence for God to take His name unnecessarily. Witnesses were therefore not sworn, but they were earnestly exhorted to speak the truth. It was solemnly impressed upon them, that the fate of a fellow-being depended upon the accuracy and exactness with which they discharged their duty.<sup>2</sup> In this country the verdict of a jury must be unanimous, to secure acquittal or condemnation. According to the Jewish system, the decision followed the opinion of the majority of the judges. But while a bare majority of one was sufficient for

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 19 : 15.<sup>2</sup> Sanhedrin, 3 : 6, 4 and 5.



acquittal, a clear majority of at least two was necessary for condemnation.<sup>1</sup> Curious and noteworthy it is that when all the judges were against the accused, he was declared not guilty; the unanimous voice of condemnation, thought the Rabbis, argued a latent bias, an unconscious prejudice in the minds of the judges. As in English law, once acquitted, a man could not be re-tried on the same charge. But, if convicted, the discovery of fresh evidence or new arguments in his favour was ground for moving for a new trial.<sup>2</sup> And in order that the reprieve might not come too late, a horseman was stationed at some distance from the place of execution, with a flag in his hand, with which he might, even at the last moment, signal to the executioner to stay the gruesome proceedings.<sup>3</sup> Thus was justice tempered with mercy in the Jewish system.

### III.

The efficacy of judicial procedure, as of any other department in the State, depends not merely upon the perfection of the system administered, but on the capacity of the administrators. England glories in a long line of occupants of the Bench who have shed lustre on their exalted office by the breadth and depth of their learning, their acumen, keen penetration, sound judgment, integrity and fearlessness. But who can compare with Israel's judges? Who deserves to be placed on the same pedestal with the first of our

<sup>1</sup> Sanhedrin, 1 : 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 5 : 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 4 : 1.

judicial officers, the Law-giver, Moses, who, as soon as he had led forth the hosts of Israel from the land of their long and bitter servitude, chose 'men of courage, God-fearing, men of truth, hating covetousness,' and placed them over tens, over hundreds, over thousands, over ten thousands, not in order to lead the people in battle array against their foes, but to judge the nation truly. Where shall we find ethical directions to the judge more succinct than the texts: 'Thou shalt not wrest justice; thou shalt not show respect to persons; thou shalt not take bribes.'<sup>1</sup> And the Jewish law-giver was a living exponent of his teaching. 'Not an ass of any one of them have I taken; nor have I done evil to any of them,' he was able to say on a memorable occasion. Truly he deserved the eulogy, 'The justice of God he executed, and his judgments with Israel.'<sup>2</sup>

Worthy to rank with Moses and Aaron is Samuel the prophet: 'Moses and Aaron among his priests; and Samuel of those who call upon his name.'<sup>3</sup> Samuel did not stay under his roof-tree to administer the law. He brought justice to every man's doors. He introduced circuit assizes, an institution adopted into English legal practice by Alfred the Great, and re-introduced under the Plantagenets. Samuel, too, was a model of integrity. In his valedictory address, when he laid down the reins of office, he challenges the people: 'Whom have I oppressed? Whom have I defrauded, and from whose hand have I taken aught,

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 16: 19.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 33: 21.<sup>3</sup> Psalm 99: 6.

and hid my eyes from him ? ' (that is, overlooked his offences). And the people answered : ' Thou hast not oppressed us nor defrauded us, nor taken aught from any one of us.'<sup>1</sup>

David earned the gratitude of his subjects by his victories over their enemies. His memory is preserved for ever in the Service of Song, which resounds in places of worship all over the world. But he has another claim on our regard. In the book of Chronicles we read that ' David executed righteousness and justice for all his people.' His descendant Jehoshaphat cleared Judæa of idolatry. Of him it is said that ' he strengthened himself against Israel.' ' His heart was lifted up in the ways of God.'<sup>2</sup> Do these expressions mean that this good king was arrogant, tyrannical, or arbitrary ? Certainly not. They are intended to convey that he was not only pious, but just, superior to all personal considerations, never truckling for the sake of cheap popularity, but exalted by the fearlessness with which he executed justice.

Nor were the Rabbis who administered justice unworthy of their predecessors. Two illustrations may be given of the spirit in which the sages of the Talmud conceived and carried out the duties of their judicial office.

Simeon ben Shetach was the head of the Sanhedrin in the days of his brother-in-law, King Alexander Jannæus. One day a man brought a plaint to the Court of Appeal against the Sovereign. The head of the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 12 : 3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 17 : 1 and 6.

Sanhedrin sent for his august relative. The lackeys of the palace carried in the royal throne and placed it next to the bench. 'Stand before the court, O King,' exclaimed the Jewish judge, 'even as it is written "the two men who have a dispute shall stand before the Lord."' <sup>1</sup> Not before this court art thou asked to stand, side by side with the complainant, and on a footing of equality with him, but before the King of Kings, the Supreme Judge.' <sup>2</sup>

A man came before R. Elazar ben Chanina and complained that the branches of his neighbour's trees overhung his garden and deprived him of a portion of the light and air which he would otherwise have enjoyed. 'Come to-morrow,' said R. Elazar, 'when I will announce the decision.' 'Master,' expostulated the applicant, 'thy judgments are always so prompt, why dost thou put me off?' The Rabbi made no reply. As soon as the court had risen, he carefully went over his own grounds, and any branch that he found straggling beyond the boundaries of his property, he ruthlessly lopped off. The next day he gave his decision. Turning to the defendant, he bade him abate the nuisance and cut down the offending boughs. 'But, Master,' retorted the defendant, 'the branches of thine own trees straggle into thy neighbour's garden.' 'Go to my grounds,' replied the Rabbi, 'and as I have done, do thou.' If one wishes to deal justice fearlessly, one's own conduct must be beyond reproach. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 19 : 17.

<sup>2</sup> Tanchuma on *Shofetim*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

For over eighteen centuries Israel no longer possesses an independent criminal jurisdiction. And of civil jurisprudence, the merest fragment of arbitration has in practice survived. Jews bring their disputes before the secular law-courts of the countries in which they dwell. Let me earnestly exhort you not to assert a claim, be it against a brother Jew or against a Gentile, nor to resist a claim, unless you are fully convinced of the moral justice of your cause. If we are to be worthy exponents of our religion, we must scrupulously uphold its ethics. We should not give the scoffer cause for the sneer: 'Before you bid me extract the tiny mote from my eye, remove the huge beam from your own.'

Especially in this solemn month of preparation, should we purge ourselves of faults in our dealings with our fellow-men, before we dare ask forgiveness for sins against God. Ourselves our severest censors and sternest critics, not wresting judgment, nor showing favour, we will calmly await the Great Assize on the First Day of Tishri, in the full confidence that our judgment will come forth as the dawn, our righteousness shine forth as the noonday sun.

## INSTALLATION INTO THE OFFICE OF DAYAN.

GREAT SYNAGOGUE, MAY 13, 1902.

THE service for the installation of Dayanim is a unique and unprecedented feature in our communal life. The appointment of such officials is another instance of the recognition, on the part of the United Synagogue, of the duty of the community to the teeming Jewish population in the East End. May this ceremony, on a day concerning which the text, 'And God saw that it was good,' occurs twice, inaugurate an era of unclouded prosperity and happiness in the history of English Jewry. It is, indeed, a high privilege to be entrusted with functions first discharged by that noble pair of brothers, the great leaders of the Jewish people, Moses the Teacher and Aaron the High Priest. Of them the Midrash tells that they went in and out among the people, making peace between man and man, restoring harmony between husband and wife, turning the hearts of children to their parents, and of parents to their children. Can one conceive a nobler task than that which may earn the encomium: 'The Dayan who discharges his duty conscientiously becomes a fellow-worker of the Almighty Himself'?



For, by unravelling the tangled skein of conflicting evidence and clearing up obscure issues, he too substitutes order for chaos, and creates light where previously darkness existed ; and so, in his humble way and limited sphere, does God's work on earth.

High, however, as are the privileges, commensurately grave and solemn are the responsibilities of the office. The Dayanim are ' the eyes of the congregation.' Their duty it is to exercise vigilant supervision over the moral, religious, and spiritual interests of their flock ; by wise foresight to prevent scandal, remove legitimate cause for dissatisfaction, and deprive detraction of its sting of truth. Their functions are not merely negative. They will rightly be expected to act as unifying forces and rallying-centres for all good movements ; to help forward with hand, heart, and brain every effort for the physical, intellectual, social, spiritual uplifting of Jewry, the glorification of Judaism, the sanctification of God's name.

For these tasks special qualifications are necessary. When Jethro advised his son-in-law to appoint co-adjutors, he, at the same time, indicated the qualities such leaders should possess. They are wisdom, reverence, humility, courage, unselfishness, truthfulness, popularity. The Midrash adds that Moses found it difficult and well-nigh impossible to discover men possessing this rare combination of virtues. It is no affectation to say that, called to a high dignity in the most important Jewish community in the world, I am painfully conscious of shortcomings and deficiencies,

and clearly recognize the wide interval that separates me from predecessors who shed lustre upon their office by their profound learning and piety, and who were deservedly venerated for the sterling qualities that graced their characters. But I am grateful to the Almighty for the blessings of youth and vigour. Animated by the sincere desire to do useful and valuable work in a new sphere, I do not under-rate the difficulties that lie before me, and recognize that the present is a time not for leisured ease but for strenuous effort.

Judaism and Jewry are passing through a critical phase. The spirit of the age, which analyses, disintegrates, and dissolves everything, does not spare beliefs. The keen stress of competition makes the observance of Sabbath, Festivals, and the Dietary Laws increasingly difficult. The liberal and hospitable policy, which had become a tradition of England, and enabled the Jewish community to receive with open arms co-religionists fleeing from oppression and persecution, is being fiercely challenged. It is urged that the flood of immigration in recent years has been far from an unmixed benefit. In these disquieting times, it is especially necessary for every spiritual guide of the community to do what lies in his power to turn the edge of adverse criticism; resist and neutralize pernicious tendencies, within and without our ranks, and stimulate our brethren cheerfully to make sacrifices for our faith and race. For the success of this enterprise, robust health of body

and intellectual strength and alertness are requisite. Needed also are the goodwill and active co-operation of all sections of the community, and particularly of those who dwell in the district where one's sphere of labours mainly lies. Without this co-operation nought can be achieved ; with it much will be accomplished.

In appealing, not to one class, but to all sections of the community, the Sedrah read last Sabbath furnishes an excellent precedent : ' Speak to the whole congregation of Israel ' ;<sup>1</sup> not only to the priests or Levites, princes, elders, or judges, but to all. All Israelites, men, women and children, are exhorted to be holy, not because the arm of the law is strong enough to enforce holiness, but because the Lord, their God, is Holy.

Holiness implies a high standard of morality as well as a scrupulous observance of religious ceremonies. The Sabbath has to be kept, we are told in the 19th chapter of Leviticus ; but in the same chapter we read, ' Ye shall not deal falsely with one another ' ;<sup>2</sup> ' Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour ' ;<sup>3</sup> ' Thou shalt not go about as a tale-bearer.'<sup>4</sup> Twice in this Sedrah it is said : ' Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment.'<sup>5</sup> The first time it is the Dayanim who are exhorted to hold the scales of justice even. The second time it is the tradesman who is the subject of the homily. He, too, as our wise men quaintly express it, is a Dayan. His scales, weights, and measures must be just. His transactions, however

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 19 : 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 15 and 35.

small, must be distinguished by fair dealing. Holiness is to be evinced not only in deed and speech, but in thought and sentiment. 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart,' is an injunction, the neglect of which has wrought Israel incalculable harm.

The prophet Ezekiel, after unfolding his magnificent vision of the Valley of Dry Bones which were transformed into a mighty army, takes two staves, writes upon one of them the name of Judah and on the other the name of Joseph, and joins them so that they are one in his hand. Truly a much needed lesson! For of what use is a mighty army if the elements of which it is composed, instead of uniting against the common foe, engage in mutual destruction. The supreme need in the hosts of the Lord of Hosts is the first virtue of soldiers—discipline. To the rank and file I appeal, to live in peace and harmony, to avoid conflict and dispute, and, above all, not to burden the county court and police courts with trivial quarrels and petty squabbles. Some months ago, a magistrate publicly said in my presence: 'We are obliged to the Chief Rabbi's Court of Arbitration for assisting the administration of justice. The Beth Din possesses facilities for arriving at the truth, as its members are familiar with the language and mode of thought of foreign Jews, whom we therefore earnestly advise to resort to that tribunal.' And certainly the Beth Din, by the care and deliberateness with which it deals with each case, strives to secure substantial justice, so that, frequently, litigants, who come before it embittered antagonists,

are reconciled by its friendly offices, and leave staunch friends.

The men of light and leading in the East End, they who stand out prominently by reason of their knowledge, energy, and initiative, are earnestly implored not to retire to their tents, or build every one a high place for himself, but to accord the valued assistance of their loyalty and goodwill. Combination is better than competition. The latter, though certainly stimulating energy, involves enormous waste of force; the former secures the same results with a maximum of efficiency and economy. I ask you to aid in the worthy task of welding the community into one harmonious whole. Cherish tenaciously the specific virtues of the Jewish character, but at the same time assimilate, and help others to assimilate, the best elements of English life, so that our separateness may not be a reproach; and that the criticism of the heathen prophet, 'Behold the people that dwells apart, and among the nations it is not counted,'<sup>1</sup> shall be not a censure but a eulogy. May God, delighting in our ways, cause our enemies to be at peace with us. May there be 'no breach, no surrender, no outcry in our streets,'<sup>2</sup> no breach of continuity in the quiet and peaceful development of Anglo-Jewish life, no surrender or betrayal of the sacred principles dear to us, no outcry against us, within or without the community. May all have cause for the congratulation: 'Happy the people who are in such a case. Happy the people whose God is the Lord.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Num. 23 : 9.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 144 : 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 15.



‘HADST THOU STAYED I MUST HAVE FLED.’

BAYSWATER SYNAGOGUE, OCTOBER 26, 1907.

SOME of you will doubtless remember a poem in Longfellow's ‘Tales of a Wayside Inn,’ called ‘The Theologian's Tale,’ with the sub-title, ‘The Legend Beautiful,’ and beginning with the line: ‘Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled.’ It tells how an almoner at a religious house is visited by a vision celestial at the hour when ‘in shine or shower, summer's heat or winter's cold, all the blind and halt, all the beggars of the street’ came to the gates to receive their daily dole of food. The poet describes the almoner's perplexity, the agony of conflict that racks his soul. ‘Should he go or should he stay? Should he leave the poor, hungry at the gate till the vision had passed away? Should he leave the vision celestial for a crowd of ragged, bestial beggars at the gate? At length, he hears a voice, low and clear, audible as to the ear: ‘Do thy duty. That is best. Unto God leave all the rest.’ He obeys the call of conscience, and when he returns he finds to his delight the vision still waiting. Then he fully comprehends the import of what he had heard: ‘Hadst thou stayed, I must have fled.’



This ‘legend beautiful’ fully deserves its title. It is indeed exceedingly beautiful. It has, however, a still finer prototype in the narrative at the beginning of this morning’s Sedrah: ‘And the Lord appeared to him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre;<sup>1</sup> and he was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes, and lo, and behold, three men were standing by him. And when he saw, he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and he bowed down to the ground. And he said: O Lord, if I have now found favour in Thy sight, do not, I entreat Thee, pass away from Thy servant.’<sup>2</sup> There is a difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of the first word in this text, and as to who was addressed in it. According to one interpretation, *Adonai* is a secular word. It means Master, Sir. The sentence was a request to the leader of the band of angels, that he and his companions might break their journey, and rest awhile under the patriarch’s roof. According to another explanation, *Adonai* is a sacred term and is an appellation of the Almighty. The patriarch appealed to the vision celestial that had favoured him, not to leave him till he had discharged the duties of hospitality to his visitors. And if this is, indeed, the sense of the text, his petition was granted. For we read further on: ‘And after the men had turned thence and gone to Sodom, Abraham was still standing before the Lord.’<sup>3</sup> The celestial vision had not disappeared. Or, as Rashi still more explicitly has it, here

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 18 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

there is a *Tikkun Soferim*, an intentional transposition by the scribes to prevent an erroneous anthropomorphic misconception. The text originally read: 'The Eternal was still staying with Abraham.'

So far the parallel between the secular poem and the sacred narrative. The contrasts are still more striking and instructive. Noble was the conflict of emotions that racked the almoner's soul. But far nobler was the patriarch's freedom from conflict, his prompt decision. He does not hesitate, even for a single moment. He has no doubt whatsoever where his duty lies. He knew full well that practical philanthropy stands on a higher plane than ecstatic contemplation of the Infinite, than the striving of the human soul to commune with the Soul of the universe. Another antithesis may be noted. The poet represents the almoner as looking down upon the needy and indigent; they are to him 'a crowd of ragged, bestial beggars at the gate.' But the patriarch regards his visitors as worthy of all honour and receives them with distinguished courtesy. Despite the oppressive heat of an Eastern summer's noon, he sits at the door of his tent, looking out for strangers whom he might entertain. As soon as he spies them, notwithstanding his advanced age and weakness, he runs to meet them, and entreats them to accept his hospitality. Like all truly good people, he promises little but performs much. Some water will be fetched, so that they may wash off the dust from their feet. He will bring them a morsel of bread to stay their hunger, strengthen them, and enable them to continue their journey.

When they had signified their assent, the patriarch sets before his guests a sumptuous repast.

This is not an isolated instance of Abraham's hospitality. It is typical of his entire career. At the close of this week's Sedrah, we read : ‘ He planted an **אֵשֶׁל** in Beer-Sheba and he called there on the name of the Eternal, God of the Universe.’<sup>1</sup> The word **אֵשֶׁל** has been variously rendered, a grove or a tamarisk tree. Our wise men take it to mean an inn or an orchard. The three letters of the word **אֵשֶׁל** form the initials of the three words **אֲכִילָה שְׁתִּיה לִינָה**, food, drink, lodging. Abraham, according to an ancient tradition, established a hostel for the reception of wayfarers, not for private pecuniary gain, but from motives of humanity, for love of mankind. His house was open on all four sides, so that from whichever direction the weary, footsore wanderer might come, the open door would bid him enter and offer him a ready resting-place in the patriarch's home. No difference was made between believer and infidel, between worshipper of the true God and idolater. All human beings were made in the image of the Almighty and all were equally welcome. Ordinary courtesy would prompt his guests, as they were about to resume their journey, to acknowledge the hospitality they had enjoyed. But the patriarch refused to accept even their bare thanks. ‘I am not the master here, but only the servant.’ ‘Who, then, is the master to whom we should express gratitude?’ the guests would ask. ‘Who else,’ the patriarch would reply, ‘but the Lord, God of the world,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 21 : 33.

Possessor of Heaven and earth, Source of life, Who slayeth and reviveth, bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up again, maketh poor and rich.' Thus Abraham called on the name of the Eternal, the God of the Universe. Thus the patriarch won souls, led human beings to a knowledge of the truth and brought them under the wings of the Shechinah. His gentleness, courtesy, kindness drew out the same qualities in his guests—angelic qualities inherent in human nature and only needing development.

This large-heartedness, which extended to sinner as to saint, did not find limited expression in hospitality to wayfarers. With what passionate fervour he pleads with the Judge of the Universe for the inhabitants of the doomed cities, for the reprobates of Sodom and Gomorrah: 'Peradventure there are fifty good men in the city, wilt Thou not save the city for the sake of the fifty'? 'I would fain speak unto the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes. Peradventure there are forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, ten. Spare the city for the sake of the ten righteous men.'<sup>1</sup>

Can we wonder that, possessing such generous instincts, exhibiting such wide sympathies, Abraham enjoys immunity from persecution. A stranger in a strange land, preaching a strange doctrine, he passes unscathed through Canaan and Philistia, is acclaimed by the people of the land as a Prince of God, and greeted by a king with the words: 'God is with thee in all that thou doest.'<sup>2</sup> 'According to the kindness

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 18: 23-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 21: 22.

I have shown unto thee, show unto me and to the land wherein thou sojournest.’<sup>1</sup>

My brethren, the biographies of our great men are set down in Holy Writ to serve us as patterns. Their sublime lives shall teach us how to make our lives sublime. The third patriarch, Jacob, who toils for twenty years by day and by night to provide for the future of his children, who prays: ‘Save me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him lest he come and slay mother and children,’<sup>2</sup> sets us an example of devotion to the family. Abraham, who leaves home and country to help the world, and whose sympathies are not limited to kith and kin, teaches us that charity should not be narrow and restricted. Love of humanity and practical benevolence should extend beyond the bounds of our own community to the larger community of our fellow-citizens who do not belong to our race nor profess our creed. ‘According to the kindness which I have shown unto thee, show unto me and to the land wherein thou sojournest.’

To-morrow is Citizen Sunday. Is it not fitting that we should devote a little thought to our civic duties? We have, indeed, reason to be proud of this mighty capital in which we dwell, the mother-city of the greatest empire in the world. We do not realize the splendour, the pulsating vitality, of this wondrous metropolis till we have left it awhile.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 21 : 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 32 : 11.



When we return, our hearts are warm with the feeling that we are once more at home, and that we may well thank God for our home. But does not this great city present great problems which should cause us heart-searchings? What of the submerged tenth, the thousands who from the beginning of the year to its close suffer from lack of work? What of the myriads, whose existence is a hand-to-mouth struggle, because of the precarious and intermittent character of their employment? Side by side with the spectacle of vast wealth and lavish display, there stalk through our streets gaunt spectres of dire poverty and wretched misery, a scathing satire on our boasted civilization. Certainly, we have a Poor Law system established three centuries ago, and no one need starve. But recent government inquiries have revealed appalling waste, extravagance and corruption in the administration of several metropolitan unions, and competent observers have always deplored the mechanical and soulless working of the Poor Law, which, instead of raising those who claim relief, wrecks their self-respect and destroys their manliness.

Again, the unemployment which causes so much misery and helps to increase the number of the 'submerged tenth'—is it not partly due to the lack of right training? Since the year 1870, a universal system of elementary education has been in force, which affords every child the opportunity of acquiring the rudiments of learning. Recently, a ladder has been erected which reaches from the Council school to the university



itself. For the exceptionally gifted scholars, this is, indeed, a boon. But is our system of elementary education planned on the right lines? Is it not of too literary a character to meet the needs of the bulk of the scholars who come from the working classes? Does it not give them a distaste for manual labour and serve still further to overcrowd the already sufficiently congested market of clerks and errand boys? There is a spirit of unrest at the present time. Much wild socialism is ventilated in a section of the press and at the street corners. Whose is the fault? Does not the blame lie at the door of the middle classes, who consider that they have discharged their civic duties in full when they have paid the rates and taxes levied on them, and take no further interest in the expenditure of the funds they have provided?

If we are to prove ourselves worthy disciples and descendants of the patriarch, we must give not only our money, but our hearts and our brains, our thoughts and our sympathies, towards the betterment of the condition of our fellow-citizens, irrespective of race or creed. Foolish and futile revolutionary socialism can only be effectively combated by wise, true socialism,—the socialism of religion, of Judaism, the law of loving-kindness. The poison of wild doctrine which, in order to create a new heaven upon earth, advocates the destruction of society, as at present constituted, will be best counteracted by following in the footsteps of our great ancestor. He did not attempt to make all men happy by preaching the confiscation of

private property, which would destroy all incentive to industry and enterprise, but, while recognizing the inevitable inequality in the human lot, he strove to bridge the gulf between rich and poor by justice and integrity, loving-kindness and mercy. We cannot, under modern conditions in big towns, practise the virtue of hospitality as Abraham did of old in the plains of Mamre, but we can show ourselves worthy successors of our illustrious ancestor by adopting his principles and applying them to the great municipal problems of to-day.

So shall we justify the encomium: 'I love him because he will charge his children and household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and loving-kindness in order that God may bring upon Abraham that which He had spoken concerning him.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 18: 19.

## THE SABBATICAL YEAR AND THE JUBILEE.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, MAY 24, 1902.

A SALIENT distinction between Judaism and its daughter-creed is that, while the latter insists on Faith as necessary to Salvation, the former dwells rather on the importance of Works. To be a good Jew it is not sufficient to have correct views on theology; one must lead a worthy and noble life. 'Thou shalt *do* what is good and right in the sight of the Lord thy God.'<sup>1</sup> Hence, there is no human function, no sphere of activity, that does not come within the purview of our religion. The Torah does not merely enunciate dogmas and principles of faith, or prescribe rites and ceremonies; it also unfolds a code of morals, a system of jurisprudence, social regulations that make for the well-being of the individual and the prosperity of the state in which he dwells.

Illustrations are furnished us by the Sedrah of this morning in the laws of the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee; ordinances which, for loftiness of conception and comprehensiveness of scope, for wisdom and humanity, have no equal in any other legislation,

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 6: 18.

ancient or modern. Let us consider these two institutions which form the coping-stones of a complete system of Sabbaths.

After six days' toil, one day is set apart as a weekly day of rest, in order to remind us that the universe belongs to the Creator, and that He has especial claims on the homage and service of His redeemed ones. After six months' work—ploughing, sowing, reaping, harvesting, garnering, storing the produce of field, vineyard, olive-yard, and orchard—the seventh month is set apart for religious festivities; and the tenth day of that month is styled 'a Sabbath of rest.' And so too, after six years' labour, the seventh year was to be kept as a Sabbatical year.

Modern agriculture, to save the soil from exhaustion, has adopted a system of rotation of crops. One year a field is sown with grain, the next with rape seed, the third it is put under grass. In ancient times, the same result was attained in another way. In successive years, each field was alternately cultivated, and permitted to lie fallow. But Palestine was so rich that its fields could bear similar crops year after year without apparent deterioration. Still, the land also has rights which should not be abused by extravagant and wasteful modes of cultivation. Hence we read: 'Six years shalt thou sow thy field, and six years shalt thou prune thy vineyard; but on the seventh year, there shall be a Sabbath of rest to the land; thy field thou shalt not sow, and thy vineyard thou shalt not prune.'<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 25: 3-4.

was also to be a Sabbath for the people. The increase of the fields in that year, the aftermath produced without human labour, was God's harvest, and was to be enjoyed by all without distinction ; by rich and poor, natives and aliens, residents and strangers, owners and neighbours. It was to be a Sabbath to the Lord. Just as the weekly day of rest is not to be spent in idleness, but devoted to spiritual recuperation, so the Sabbatical year was to be given up to religious meditation and study. And thus we are told in the book of Deuteronomy that on the Feast of Tabernacles, in the Sabbatical year, the Law was read to the people.<sup>1</sup>

Though we are all children of God, yet we are not all equally gifted. Some are more richly endowed than others with physical vigour, mental alertness and capacity. Some are peculiarly handicapped and burdened with encumbrances. Hence the danger that, in course of time, the land—ultimate source of all wealth—might fall into the hands of a few, and society present the spectacle of two opposing classes : one limited to a few territorial magnates living in idleness and baneful luxury, the other consisting of a vast proletariat forced to toil for bare subsistence. The servile wars and agrarian revolts that agitated the Roman Republic, illustrate the gravity of this menace to the social order. To guard against the danger which would certainly result from the widening rift between rich and poor, the Mosaic legislation instituted a system of automatic readjustment. After seven times seven years had elapsed, estates

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 31 : 10, 11.

that had been alienated returned to their original owners or their families; and those who had been compelled by poverty to sell themselves into slavery recovered their freedom.

Were these wise and beneficent laws strictly observed? In reference to a large portion of the Biblical period, the reply must be in the negative. In the days of the Judges, and during the reigns of the kings of Judah and of Israel, the bulk of the nation was constantly relapsing into the heathendom of the peoples about them, and the Mosaic law for them was a dead letter. Throughout the whole of that period, however, the men of God steadily kept before the eyes of the nation the lofty ideals of the Pentateuch. 'Woe to those who join house to house and field to field, so that there is no more room, that ye may be settled alone in the land,'<sup>1</sup> exclaims the prince of prophets. So, too, Micah denounces those who deprive the peasants of their farms and homesteads. And Jeremiah exhorts his contemporaries to observe the Jubilee and release their Hebrew slaves.<sup>2</sup> A few of the princes obeyed, but soon afterwards called back their former bondsmen to subjection, and Jeremiah, in his indignation, proclaims a new Jubilee, a year of liberty to fire, sword, and famine, to devastate the land and destroy its unworthy inhabitants.

When our forefathers returned from Babylon, they were completely purged of idolatry. Judaism revived, and Nehemiah speaks of the Sabbatical

<sup>1</sup> Is. 5: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 34: 8 ff.



Year and the Jubilee. In post-biblical literature there are also references to these institutions. Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar, we are told, remitted the taxes to their Jewish subjects in those years. Not all Roman Emperors were as kind. Severus rigorously exacted the tribute from his Hebrew subjects, and Rabbi Jannai, the chief authority of that time, was compelled to suspend the operation of the Sabbatical year.

The Jubilee was always proclaimed on the holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement. And appropriately so. For the Day of Atonement makes peace between man and God; the Jubilee restores harmony between man and his neighbour. The Day of Atonement removes the disturbing influence of sin; the Jubilee, the disturbing influence of social inequality. The Day of Atonement purifies the soul; the Jubilee revives the State. Both mark the inauguration of a new period of grace.

Ought we not to take to heart the lessons of the social legislation of the ancient Mosaic code? Energy and enterprise are excellent and commendable. But these qualities are pushed too far, when, in the scramble for wealth, we thrust competitors aside, all too roughly and rudely. Even in things permitted, we should set an example of wise discretion and self-restraint, and thus we shall speed the advent of that glorious period of which the Jubilee is a symbol, when there shall be no feud between class and class, race and race, creed and creed, when all men will form one people, be joined into one brotherhood, worshipping one God.

## HOSPITAL SABBATH.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, JUNE 23, 1900.

THE first three verses of the 41st Psalm have just been recited—an exhortation to consider the poor.

According to one commentator,<sup>1</sup> the Psalm is an invitation to reflect upon the conditions and circumstances of the needy, and to recognize in those conditions proofs of Divine providence.

‘The rich man’s wealth is his strong city,’<sup>2</sup> says the wise king in the book of Proverbs. But who helps the poor man to tide over periods of depression? Who else but the good God. ‘On the day of evil the Eternal delivereth him’ (the poor man). The wealthy man is in a position to surround himself with material comforts and luxuries. Who keeps the poor man strong, robust and fit for the battle of life? The psalmist replies: ‘The Eternal guards and preserves him.’ The opulent merchant’s treasure-laden argosies sail on every ocean, bringing back in return untold wealth from the ends of the earth. But the poor man has no such resource. He is forced to

<sup>1</sup> Malbim.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. 10: 15.

seek his bread in a limited area. Still, 'the poor man is rendered happy in the land,' where his lot is cast. The man of substance has many friends to champion his cause. Nevertheless, the needy man is not altogether forlorn. 'Thou wilt not surrender him into the power of his enemies.' The rich man, when he is prostrated by sickness, can call to his aid the highest medical skill, can command the tenderest and most patient nursing. Yet the poor man is not entirely abandoned. 'The Lord supports him on the couch of languishing. All his bed thou hast changed in his illness.'

Without attempting to discuss the correctness of this poetical exposition, we will only urge that the psalmist would surely not have us be content with idle musings and empty speculations on the condition of the poor. 'Happy he who *wisely* considereth the poor.' Happy he who does not relieve an uneasy conscience by indiscriminate and spasmodic almsgiving, but carefully considers how he might afford help to the needy, in the best and most practical form.' The psalmist has in mind the distinction between charity in its conventional, and charity in its true sense, a distinction which has been well brought out by our wise men. Charity as conventionally understood will, they point out, only be accepted by those who have fallen so low in the social scale that destitution has robbed them of the last vestige of self-respect and independence. But true charity can be shown to social equals and superiors, as well as to those less

favourably circumstanced. For conventional charity takes the form of monetary benefactions and doles. But true charity is love and goodwill exhibited in words of wise counsel and kindly encouragement, active sympathy and helpfulness. And so too, while alms only avail the living, charity in thought, speech and act can also be exercised towards those who have passed away.

One of the noblest forms of true loving-kindness, that may be shown to all, irrespective of their rank and station, whatever be their position and means, is visiting the sick. 'Happy he who wisely considereth the poor.' Who, indeed, is so poor as the prisoner in his chamber, bound hand and foot, robbed of strength, racked with agony? But especially pitiable is the state of one weighed down by the crushing double burden of sickness and poverty. How tragic are the circumstances of the family whose breadwinner is disabled! How chaotic is the condition of the home whose mistress is an invalid!

Rightly have our teachers declared: 'He who visits the sick eases him of a portion of his pain, relieves him, to some extent, of his infirmity, and puts new life into him.'<sup>1</sup> This is not a figment of the exuberant Oriental imagination, or the exaggeration of poetic licence, but sober, literal truth. Mind and body are so intimately united, that each portion of our dual nature reacts

<sup>1</sup> Nedarim, 39b.

upon the other, and we can quite realize that the welcome sight of a friend would cheer, rouse, stimulate and exhilarate the depressed patient, almost as much as the bright summer sunshine or the invigorating breeze that sweeps across the heath and heather on an early spring morn.

The advantages are mutual; a visit to the stricken is of benefit to the visitor as much as to the visited. The contrast between the glare and tumult of the noisy, sunny street, on the one hand, and the subdued light and hushed stillness of the sick chamber, on the other, cannot fail to impress the least reflective person, and must, if only for a brief while, compel thought and self-examination. 'Am I conscious,' the visitor will ask himself, 'of the great boons which the good God has bestowed on me? Do I sufficiently appreciate them? Am I thankful enough for the health, vigour and vitality that have been vouchsafed me in such abundant measure? Am I employing my powers, capacities, abilities, to the best purpose and for the worthiest ends, or am I frittering away my energies and wasting my life?' Such self-communings are of inestimable benefit. They may raise a man when he is sinking, set his feet firmly on dry land, turn his face in the right direction, help him onwards and lift him heavenward. And thus our sages teach: 'He who visits the sick is saved from *Gehinnom*,'<sup>1</sup> or, as one might in modern language paraphrase it, the practice of this virtue, the fulfilment of this religious

<sup>1</sup> Nedarim, 40a.

duty, will rescue a man from ruin on earth and retribution hereafter.

In a vast metropolis like London, which is not a town, but a province, larger than many a continental kingdom, it is exceedingly difficult, well-nigh impossible, adequately to fulfil the duty of *Bikkur Cholim*. All the more reason, therefore, for generously supporting the medical institutions, styled in Hebrew, *Hekdesh*, sanctuary, in French, *Hôtels-Dieu*, Hostels of God, where the poor find not only sanctuary and refuge, but receive kindly and skilful treatment, and are restored to health, vigour and usefulness.

The Hospital Fund has a special claim upon us this year, and, strangely, the very circumstance that lies at the base of this claim may cause it to be forgotten. The minds of all British subjects have, for the past eight months, been occupied with thoughts of the campaign now waged in South Africa, to the exclusion of all other topics. Appeals have been made from the pulpit on behalf of the families of those who are upholding the British flag, for those who, in fighting Britain's battles, have been maimed, crippled, disabled; for the orphans and widows of the heroes reposing in nameless graves on the African veldt. These appeals have met with a generous response, and this notwithstanding slackness of trade, a direct outcome of the war. But generosity has its limits, and there is a risk that the various funds raised this year may materially prejudice the success of the Fund for which I am now pleading. This ought not to be so. The



War itself should be the best advocate for the Metropolitan Medical Charities. The severe test of practical experience has discovered many a flaw in the national armoury of offence and defence, many defects in its military system which already have been, or, in the immediate future, will be remedied. There is one department, however, which has passed through the ordeal unscathed, its reputation untarnished and even enhanced. Need I add that I refer to the Army Medical Service. I will not dwell on the courage of the military and civilian medical officers who, in spite of the hailstorm of shot and shell, rendered aid to the wounded on the exposed battlefield as coolly and calmly as if they were in their own surgeries. But what I wish to impress upon you is the discipline, organization and skill exhibited in the hospitals, in camp and at the base. Where did these men acquire the discipline that obeys, and knows how to enforce obedience? Where did they gain their power of organization and readiness in emergency? Where else but in the schools attached to the medical institutions which send out, yearly, hundreds of officers, to wage incessant warfare with death and disease, and thus confer a boon not merely on the poor, but also on the wealthy and the middle classes.

The Jewish community owes a special debt of gratitude to the Metropolitan Hospitals for their undenominational character. They make no distinctions between Jew and Gentile, alien and native, being happily free from the virus of Antisemitism. Several

of the Metropolitan Medical Institutions have even made special arrangements to meet the dietary needs of our suffering brethren, and so, it is contended, have rendered a special hospital for the reception of sick co-religionists unnecessary.

I therefore heartily, earnestly, and confidently ask for a liberal and generous response to the appeal of the Mansion House Hospital Fund. Even as a coat of mail which protected the warrior on the day of battle was made up of thousands of links, so the accumulation of small gifts will swell the grand total which will help the Hospitals in their arduous fight against disease and death. In an army, the private is as essential as the officer. While large contributions will not be refused, smaller sums from those who cannot afford more will be equally welcome.

Your reward will consist in the consciousness of duty done, in the assurance that you are following in the footsteps of the Great Physician 'Who raiseth the fallen, healeth the sick, releaseth those that are bound.' Your all-sufficient recompense will be that you have lived in the spirit of the psalmist's exhortations: 'Happy he who wisely considereth the poor'; those who are doubly poor in lack of means and loss of health. May God fulfil to you the second half of our text. May He deliver you from evil. May He preserve you and all dear to you in life, health, strength, and happiness.

## IN MEMORIAM: QUEEN VICTORIA.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, FEBRUARY 2, 1901.

TO-DAY, the voice of lamentation is heard in the land. Every head is bowed, every heart is heavy, every eye is dim with tears ; for the King of Terrors, no respecter of persons, who knocks with equal impartiality at the proud and lofty gates of the prince's palace and at the humble door of the peasant's hut, 'has entered our windows' and snatched a flower of rarest worth, transplanted it in the garden of God, and left us the poorer. The passing of the illustrious ruler, whose earthly shell was borne some hours since to its last resting-place, is poignantly felt, not only as a national calamity but also as a deep personal loss. Britain mourns, and all civilization sorrows with our sorrow ; shares our grief for her who has entered, thro' the dark portal, the realm of light eternal. Our late Sovereign's life exceeded the limit of fourscore years, which, the Man of God tells us, is the mark of extraordinary physical vigour. And yet few paused to reflect that, in the ordinary course of nature, the end must, at no distant interval, have come. We, born under her gracious sway, regarded Queen Victoria as

a permanent part of the British Constitution. We thought that Death had forgotten her, or been bidden by the Author of Life to pass her by and spare her for an indefinite period. The news of her demise, after a brief illness, thrilled us all with a shock of surprise. It seemed as if a majestic column, that had stood in solitary grandeur long after its fellows had fallen and crumbled into dust, had at length, in its turn, been riven from crown to pediment and come to the earth with a mighty crash.

Why this universal lament for one who had attained a hoary old age and been gathered to the grave like a shock of corn, ripe for the reaper? The reason is to be found in the general feeling that the close of this gracious life closes an epoch in English history. Queen Victoria's death rings the knell of the departed century—a century in which she was the conspicuous and central figure and of which she was the brightest ornament.

On the pedestal of the statue of one of her earliest advisers, the Hero of Waterloo,<sup>1</sup> may be read an inscription consisting of three words—simple, yet pregnant with meaning—‘Wisdom, Honour, Duty.’ Of the qualities here named, the Queen was a living embodiment and illustration. Throughout her career, she had a high sense of the dignity with which Heaven had invested her. She possessed, at the same time, a clear perception and keen appreciation of the duties entailed by that dignity.

<sup>1</sup> Wellington's statue in the Guildhall.

To her, sovereignty was no mere right of birth, no accidental privilege and prerogative. It was a solemn charge, a sacred trust. It is related that when, a child of twelve summers, she was informed that she stood next in succession to her uncle, the reigning sovereign, she burst into tears and earnestly prayed that God might make her worthy of the high estate. The prayer was answered in the spirit in which it was offered. Six years later, when she ascended the throne, she took all hearts captive by her youthful charm and grace. She was not content, however, with the sweets of her exalted office. She aspired to wield its power. She was not satisfied to be a figure-head ; her ambition was to be captain of the ship of State ; real, and not merely nominal Head of her country. And she honourably realized her ambition. Soon after her accession, Lord Melbourne, her first Prime Minister and trusted friend, once placed a State document before her with the request that it should be immediately signed, on the ground of its urgency and importance. The youthful sovereign rebuked her servant with the dignified reply : ‘ It is still more urgent and important that I do not sign any paper before I have fully grasped and mastered its import and purport.’

The position of a constitutional monarch in these isles, amidst the conflict of rival parties with clashing interests and opposing principles, is not an easy one. Yet, with such admirable tact did Queen Victoria fill her office, so evenly did she hold the scales, that none can tell with absolute certainty in which direction



her own political sympathies lay. Many sovereigns have been fortunate in their ministers. The ministers of Great Britain, for the last six decades, have, it is no exaggeration to say, been fortunate in their sovereign. As years rolled on, they learned to rely with implicit confidence on her mature judgment and store of ripe experience, which gained her, in the opinion of those qualified to decide, the title—‘the wisest Statesman and most influential Monarch of modern times.’ How much of the progress and development not only of these isles but of the whole of Europe is due to her calm counsels and moderating influence on her brother sovereigns, history has yet to recount.

She had her supreme reward in the love and affection, in the whole-hearted loyalty and devotion, in the ever-increasing reverence and veneration with which she inspired all sections of her subjects, who felt that the interest that lay nearest her heart was their weal, their permanent prosperity and happiness. They gave back measure for measure. When the hand of affliction lay heavy upon her and she was bereaved of the partner of her youth, and then of sons, daughters, grandchildren, she was ever sustained by the solacing and comforting consciousness that the nation’s heart was with her in her tribulation. The people respected her desire for seclusion and privacy. They knew full well that, though the shadow that had fallen athwart her path had indeed darkened her life, blighted her happiness and made all gaiety distasteful, yet the splendid burden of Empire would continue to



be heroically borne and its heavy duties faithfully discharged by that noble woman.

Her life, unaffected, transparently open and sincere, strenuous and laborious, was a lesson to all how life should be lived. Her home, in its simplicity and purity, was a pattern and model of what an ideal home should be. Her court, unlike the courts of some of her predecessors, was not disgraced by political intrigues. There was no Court Party in the Houses of Parliament; for all, Commons, Lords, the whole nation, were of the Queen's Party. To her we may apply the psalmist's words: 'Thou didst love righteousness and hate iniquity; therefore God anointed Thee sovereign,'<sup>1</sup> by right human, as well as by right divine.

We Jews never shall forget that it was during her reign that we lost the Ghetto bend and learned to stand erect. Sixty-four years ago, the Jew, even in this land of enlightenment, was a barely tolerated alien. He was excluded from the boon of a liberal University education. He was ineligible for State Service. He was debarred from Parliamentary representation. What a marvellous change has taken place in two short generations, thanks largely to the example of good Queen Victoria. Nine years after her accession, a Jew received the honour of a Baronetcy, for services rendered not to this country, but to his oppressed co-religionists abroad.<sup>2</sup> Twelve years later, success finally crowned the efforts of the City of London and

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 45 : 7.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Moses Montefiore in 1846.

the Borough of Greenwich to be represented by Jews in the House of Commons,<sup>1</sup> and how many co-religionists have sat since then in the august Mother of Parliaments. In the next decade, a Jew was appointed Solicitor-General,<sup>2</sup> and, in due course, was elevated to the dignity of the Bench, where he rendered services admitted by all to be weighty and of permanent value to English Jurisprudence. It is worthy of note that among the signatures appended to the Roll proclaiming Edward VII, King of Great Britain and Emperor of India, are to be found the names of two Jewish commoners and one Jewish peer.

Change, Decay, Death are in the inevitable order of nature. Blessed are lives lived on a high plane of noble thought and beneficent activity, wholly consecrated to duty. Thrice glorious is that career which, even after its close, rendered a service to Empire; for Victoria's death has knit together Britain's stalwart sons in a still stronger fraternal bond, the bond of a common sorrow, while the sympathy shown by foreign countries reveals 'the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.'

Queen Victoria has fully merited this universal tribute, for she served her own people and humanity at the same time. By example, ever more potent than precept, she taught kings not to extort an obedience inspired by craven fear, but through love to call forth love. Uneasy need not lie the head that wears a crown, if

<sup>1</sup> Baron Lionel de Rothschild in 1858 and Sir David Solomons in 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Sir George Jessel in 1872.

it recognizes, as the late Queen recognized, that to kingship belong duties as well as rights: calmly may the heart of that sovereign beat who resolves to govern not tyrannically or arbitrarily, but in Victoria's spirit—a spirit of justice, generosity, clemency, gentleness. States have been taught by her the value of constitutional monarchy in securing stability of government and continuity of policy.

Farewell, beautiful soul! Thy arduous labours have earned thee repose. As long as the Empire endures, so long will thy name, thy fame, the remembrance of thy glorious career, not be suffered to fade from the minds of Britain's sons and daughters. Ours be the task to raise to thee a memorial in our hearts; and on it we shall engrave in indelible characters the three watchwords, Wisdom, Honour, Duty; so that the glory of the era that will ever be associated with thy name, and be known in history as the Victorian Era, shall not be eclipsed and extinguished with the eclipse and extinction of the light of thy pilgrimage on earth, but shall shine with increasingly radiant splendour under the sway of thy beloved son and worthy successor, who enters into his heritage with the goodwill and good wishes, with the earnest blessings and the fervent prayers of all his subjects. May God prolong his days on the British Throne in health, vigour and happiness, in wisdom, worth and good fortune; and may his dynasty be established for ever.

## IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.

DALSTON SYNAGOGUE, MAY 21, 1898.

UPPERMOST in the minds of all at the present moment, is the thought of the illustrious statesman who has been recently summoned to his everlasting rest. By very force of contrast, the familiar description, in the 90th Psalm, of the average life, irresistibly suggests itself: 'The days of our years are threescore and ten; even if by reason of strength fourscore years, yet their pride is but travail and nothingness; quickly it is cut off and we fly away.'<sup>1</sup> The measure of Mr. Gladstone's days was far beyond the space allotted to most, but his life was extraordinary, not so much because of its length, but rather on account of its fulness and intensity. It was crowded with strenuous effort and noble achievement. Who that contemplates that glorious career will fail to echo the sentiment voiced by the heathen seer when he viewed Israel's peaceful encampment: 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'<sup>2</sup>

The house of God is not an arena for political

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 90 : 10.

<sup>2</sup> Num. 23 : 10.

discussion ; but the statesman we mourn was not merely the leader of a faction or party, but the Grand Old Man of the whole English-speaking race, a citizen of the world, acclaimed by oppressed nationalities as father, friend, and champion. And the Jewish pulpit would neglect its duty, if it did not join in the universal lament for the great man that has been taken this day, if it did not contribute its meed to the universal tribute of admiration for the character and career of one, whose name is writ large on the page of England's history, and the record of whose work the waters of oblivion will not easily or quickly obliterate.

There is no occasion to give details of the life of the deceased statesman. The columns of the press have, for the past few days, been filled with his biography. Let me, rather, draw your attention to the salient qualities of mind and heart of his richly endowed personality, the qualities that essentially made him what he was. In the *Sedrah*, which bears the name of the priest of Midian, and contains an account of the Revelation on Sinai, it is related that, when Jethro repaired to the wilderness to visit his son-in-law, he was appalled to find that the Lawgiver was sitting the whole day, from early morn till dewy eve, surrounded by the hosts of Israel, judging, advising, and counselling them. The elder man checked the excessive zeal of his son-in-law : ‘Thou wilt surely become weary, thou and all the people that is with thee, for the matter is too hard for thee: thou canst not do it

alone.’<sup>1</sup> He earnestly urged Moses to elect coadjutors, who would relieve him of a portion of his onerous task. But only chosen men were to be appointed, men fit to be Moses’ colleagues, possessing the necessary qualifications of leaders, ‘valiant men, God-fearing, truthful, hating covetousness.’ The Talmud tells us that Moses searched long to find individuals with all the requisite virtues, but he was disappointed in his quest. None completely reached Jethro’s high standard. Some had one of the qualities named by him, some had another, none possessed all. Happily for this generation, England’s illustrious son was favoured by God with this rare combination of gifts and virtues.

William Ewart Gladstone was valiant and truthful, God-fearing and absolutely free from the sordid failings connoted by the term ‘covetousness.’ He was a man of valour, blessed with a marvellously vigorous physical and mental constitution. Powerful as was his brain, equally sound was his physique. Many a giant wastes his vital forces, dissipates his strength, and becomes decrepit ere middle age arrives. Many a man of brilliant parts has frittered away his energies in futilities and disappointed his friends’ just expectations. The statesman whom the Empire mourns prized God’s precious gifts, which he cultivated, developed and utilized to the fullest extent; recognized the wisdom of Carlyle’s aphorism, ‘Genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains,’ and, from earliest youth to

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 18: 18.



ripest old age, never spared himself. When a boy at school, he worked heartily and played heartily. When a young man at the University, his industry was extraordinary. The same indefatigable energy, indomitable will, and concentration of purpose brought him early in his political career to the forefront, and enabled him to realize the dream of his boyhood—the coveted distinction of a seat in the Cabinet—at the age of thirty-three.

Gladstone did not need the Lawgiver's monition, 'So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.'<sup>1</sup> He counted not his days, but his hours, ay, his minutes and moments. The fruits of his rare leisure would, by themselves, have made the reputations of a dozen less gifted men. He was, throughout his life, not only a man of affairs, but also a student—a scholar as well as a statesman; and the high ideals permanently enshrined in Literature, which he brought from the realm of books into the work-a-day world, glorified and ennobled his practical career. Freed from the harness of office, he promptly and eagerly returned to his 'Temple of Peace'—his beloved library; and from his pen there flowed in rich profusion a succession of essays, addresses, pamphlets and volumes, the titles of which fill many pages of the Catalogue of the British Museum.

Gladstone possessed a heroic soul as well as a titanic intellect. He was a warrior who, throughout his long life, did incessant battle for the right. It

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 90: 12.

needed heroism to transform 'the rising hope of the unbending Tories' into a Whig, Liberal and Radical. It showed courage in the devoted son of the Church, and a High Churchman to boot, to turn his back on the principles he himself had enunciated in his first book, and to disestablish the Irish Church, because it had, he was convinced, outlived its usefulness and become a source of irritation and a rock of offence to the Roman Catholic population of the sister island. For a leader of a high-spirited nation to surrender the Transvaal to its occupiers, after the English arms had sustained a reverse, exhibited a lofty moral courage that is not yet generally understood or appreciated.

It showed the courage of initiative—a quality, alas! too rare in the guides of a nation's destiny—to open a new path in international politics, and, at a time when the citizens of this country were on the verge of war with their kinsmen across the Atlantic, to refer the cause of controversy to peaceful arbitration rather than to the cruel and bitter decision of the sword. And what other statesman has ever shattered a party for the sake of principle as Gladstone did on the Home Rule question?

I am not suggesting that Gladstone's policy was always right and deserved the unqualified approval of the nation. The purpose of these illustrations is simply to show the metal the man was made of, the mould in which he was cast. Where he felt he was in the right, nothing could move him. He was full well content, if need be, to stand alone.

To what shall we attribute his heroic temperament ? To genuine piety and religiousness. His many changes of policy, principle and party were not easily followed by the multitude. His dialectical distinctions were too subtle to be readily understood, and, on more than one occasion, exposed him to the undeserved taunt of insincerity. It is recorded that, when once this charge was heedlessly repeated in the hearing of the late Dean of St. Paul's, that high-minded dignitary, who had had opportunities of closely observing the statesman, exclaimed with suppressed emotion : ' Gladstone insincere ! Do you know, sir, that he goes straight from God to the great affairs of State ? ' In an age which is sorely stricken with the maladies of scepticism, infidelity and, as a natural consequence, pessimism ; in a period of decadence, when critics of the Holy Scriptures have dared deliberately to accuse the inspired writers of pious frauds ; in a generation when, despite the great mysteries of life and death, the reality of a spiritual life is denied and the existence of this glorious and beautiful world is ascribed to a ' fortuitous concourse of atoms,' while its Creator and Ruler is explained away as a ' stream of tendency making for righteousness,' it is refreshing to find that the foremost man of the day believed with heart and soul in a personal God and a Divine revelation, and bore eloquent testimony to the strength and support, solace and comfort, which he derived from his faith. It is gratifying to record that the aged statesman broke a lance for the authenticity of the Scriptures, and it puts

our indolence to the blush to read that, up to a very recent period, it was the practice of this octogenarian, whenever he stayed at his country seat, to walk every morning, before eight, a mile and a half to the house of prayer at Hawarden to offer his devotions.

Gladstone did not always carry the country with him. He frequently made mistakes. Who are free from them? Those alone never err who are content to vegetate rather than live, who are satisfied to mark time rather than march onward. The pioneer, who leaves the beaten path, frequently misses the way and has to retrace his steps. The experimenter must expect failures. If Gladstone changed his principles, policy and party, it was because he recognized that stagnation is death, while movement, progress and development are the necessary conditions of healthy life for the nation as well as the individual. If he avowed his changes of conviction fearlessly and openly, it was because his nature was essentially truthful and frank, genuine and transparently sincere. The policy of sphinxlike silence and mystery was repugnant to his simple, straightforward character.

The last qualification of a leader, according to the Midianite priest, is 'hatred of covetousness.'<sup>1</sup> Unselfishness and incorruptibility were happily not unique qualities in this statesman. He shared them with all who have wielded the destinies of this country in the present century. Neither he nor his celebrated rival used the exceptional opportunities afforded them by their public positions to increase their private fortunes.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ex. 18: 21.

‘Happy art thou, O land, whose king is free.’<sup>1</sup> Happy is this country in having been influenced, for the past sixty years, directly and indirectly, by one free from pettiness, by one who fully deserves the designations of scholar, statesman, and true and worthy leader of men.

The mighty brain is at rest ; the lips from which flowed the music of stately eloquence are mute. The giant has left no equal, and it would be presumptuous in pigmies to hope to emulate his activities ; but the lofty traits of his character, his noble qualities of heart and soul, the virtues that adorned his career, we should not only admire but also cultivate. We should strive to realize his sense of the sanctity of time. His consecration of life and work, his burning indignation against oppression, his warm-hearted sympathy with the oppressed, his high moral courage, his old-world courtesy towards the young, just commencing to climb the ladder, his profound humility in the presence of the Universal Father, his sincere and genuine piety—these should animate our souls and inspire our lives.

So shall the silent lips still breathe eloquent messages, and the white flower of a noble life shed its fragrance far and wide, for many a generation ; and concerning us, too, it will be said as may truly be said of him : ‘Let me die the death of the righteous and let my latter end be like his.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 10 : 17.

<sup>2</sup> Num. 23 : 10.

## IN MEMORIAM: REV. SIMEON SINGER.

GREAT SYNAGOGUE, MAY 22, 1909.

THE great Reaper, ever busy with his sickle, has, within the last few weeks, cut down two veterans who stood at opposite poles of religious thought. David Woolf Marks, who, in another two years, would have attained his centenary, was the protagonist of the Reform movement which, nearly seventy years ago, rent the community in twain, divided families and sundered the hearts of brothers, parents and children. The fears and forebodings, then entertained of the effects of the secession upon the future of Judaism, have, happily, proved unfounded. The breach, if not quite closed, has at all events not widened. The wound no longer throbs and smarts. Between the members of the Berkeley Street Synagogue and the rest of the community, sentiments of mutual toleration, respect, and, one might even say, brotherly regard, prevail. For this consummation, thanks are largely due to the restraining, calming and moderating influence of the veteran minister who has passed away.

A man of a different type was Ellis Franklin,



whose earthly remains were borne to their resting-place eight days ago. He was a champion, or rather, as the term is too strong for his gentle nature, let us rather say, a representative of conservative Judaism, a firm upholder of traditional orthodoxy. His life presented a harmony of sweetness and light, a felicitous blending of modern culture with old-fashioned piety and religious fervour. His temperament was averse from vehement conflict and controversy, and, because of his quiet conciliatory spirit, he was all the more effective in the furtherance of good causes. The blessing was vouchsafed to him עולמך תראה בחיך. In his green old age, he was surrounded by a circle of devoted friends and affectionate relatives, sons, daughters and grandchildren, whom he had imbued with his traditions, who follow in his footsteps, rendered, and still render, signal services to the community.

The one who is to form the subject of to-day's discourse occupies a midway position between these two co-religionists. He did not, like them, attain to patriarchal days, but his brief life of fifty-eight years was crowded with work and achievements. A minister of the conservative wing of English Jewry, he was conservative, but with liberal instincts, sympathies and tendencies. I refer to the late Rev. Simeon Singer, in honour of whose memory I have been asked to give a sermon on this Sabbath.

Some may question the propriety of this mode of perpetuating his memory. Those who did not see eye to eye with him on religious policies may recall

the custom that, even in the case of the illustrious dead, no *Hesped* should be delivered after the lapse of a twelvemonth from their demise.<sup>1</sup> While I do not propose to deliver a *Hesped*, I may say that Mr. Singer was so many-sided that, for some years to come, homilies by those who had the privilege of intimate acquaintance with him will prove useful, if the example of his vigorous strenuousness is made to serve as a stimulus, an inspiration, a corrective to the flabbiness of a slacker generation. I shall avoid exaggerated eulogy which, our wise men say, is mockery of the departed, refrain from the repetition of hearsay, and only speak of what came within my personal ken.

## I.

Thirty-five years ago, I first learned to know Mr. Singer when, besides acting as minister of the Borough Synagogue, he was Hebrew and English master at the Jews' College School, where I was a pupil. Without claiming extraordinary depth of erudition or encyclopædic range of knowledge, he impressed everyone as an all-round man, without angularities or singularities, with a sane, wholesome outlook upon life. He was always a hard worker. Before he came to school in the morning, it was a matter of common knowledge that he had spent several hours in private study. His literary style, simple and polished, terse, virile, and nervous, free from affectations and conceits, was not a gift of nature like his charming personality,

<sup>1</sup> Joreh Dëah, § 344: 20 (Turé Zahab).

his grace of manner, coruscating wit and lambent humour. His excellent style was the direct result of close and unremitting application, the sedulous study of the best models of prose and verse in English literature of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. He was a Hebrew scholar too. To competent critics who could look beneath the surface, his sermons, by their allusions, showed a considerable familiarity with Midrashic lore. Nor was he content merely to cull flowers of fancy from the gardens of the Aggadah. He also cultivated the rugged and difficult but useful fields of Halachah. I can testify that he devoted at least two hours daily to the intricate mazes of Talmudic dialectics. He made no secret of it. Every day, after his work as a teacher was over, his pupils saw their master himself assume the rôle of a pupil. Between four and six in the afternoon, he read 'Gemara' regularly with a Rabbi, whom, be it added, he remunerated liberally out of his scanty earnings. And this habit of study continued with him throughout his life. Mr. Singer presented a shining illustration of the fulfilment of a religious duty, which lies at the base of Judaism, and to which the approaching anniversary of the Divine Revelation lends special emphasis—the duty of studying the Torah, which is incumbent on all Israelites, rich and poor, workmen, merchants, and those engaged in professions, but especially imperative for those who have assumed, or aspire to assume, Mr. Singer's vocation—that of a minister of religion. *They* must ever bear in mind that stores become

rapidly exhausted if not constantly replenished. To teach efficiently, one must continue learning. Those of whom it may be said **תורתם אומנתם**, that their main occupation should be Torah, when they will be asked by the Almighty, **קבעת עתים לתורה**, 'Have you set apart regular times for study?' should be able to reply with a confident affirmative.

Why do I labour so obvious and trite a commonplace? Because I fear it is no longer obvious. In some quarters, the necessity of scholarship in a minister's equipment has been challenged, and devotion to study is resented as possibly clogging efficiency in parochial work. Let the community always remember, and its ministers never forget, that Mr. Singer, the most popular minister of them all, was, throughout his career, a constant student of sacred and secular lore.

## II.

'If a man has learned but not taught, what profit has he of his learning?' ask our sages. The intellectual quartz has to be crushed, the precious grains extracted, and the fine gold of noble thoughts presented in a noble setting. On Mr. Singer's powers as a preacher and public speaker, both in the pulpit and on the platform, it were superfluous to dwell. The sway he exercised over his hearers was not due to mere oratorical skill, polished diction and perfect elocution, but to the consciousness that behind the silvery voice there was a man who had real messages to deliver, messages which came from his mind and heart, and therefore went

straight to the heart and carried conviction to the mind. Apart from his sermons and addresses, his version of the Liturgy, scholarly and accurate, yet simple and devotional, will preserve his memory. When most of us shall have passed away, Mr. Singer, through his 'Authorised Daily Prayer-Book,' will, though departed, still speak to our children and grandchildren.

Let me crave your attention to a side of his life to which sufficient justice has not yet been done ; I mean his work as a teacher in the plain and literal sense of the term. If I recount some of my reminiscences of him in that capacity, it is because these are pertinent to, and have a bearing upon, a living and burning question of to-day. There is no more engrossing problem than that of the adequate Hebrew and religious instruction of the young—none more canvassed. A report has recently been presented to the Jewish Religious Education Board, calling attention to defects and suggesting remedies. Teachers and managers of our religion classes hold periodical conferences, at which syllabuses, time-tables, systems and methods of instruction are discussed. Religious education is a standing topic for leading articles in the communal press, as well as for the lucubrations that see the light in its correspondence columns.

Amid the whirlwind of talk, much of it vague and crude, ill-informed and ill-digested, it may be useful to recall what a practical educationalist like Mr. Singer deemed an adequate standard of religious instruction. What was the kind and amount of mental



and moral pabulum on which he nourished the minds and hearts of those entrusted to his charge thirty-five years ago ? A statement of the curriculum at the Jews' College School, though it may be tedious to many, should at least prove interesting to those engaged in teaching. The work regularly done in a class, the average age of the pupils of which was twelve years, was as follows : Two hours a week were devoted to the translation of the whole Sedrah ; one hour to translation of the Prayer-Book ; one hour to the study of historical books of the Bible in the original—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, &c. ; one hour to other portions of Bible history ; one hour to Hebrew grammar and composition ; one hour to a systematic exposition of the principles of Judaism, including the history of its development ; and an additional hour was spent, with the senior boys, on the translation and exposition of Psalms, Proverbs, and other books of the Hagiography, alternately with readings in the *Chajé Adám*. I would ask you to note the following points. First, this was the curriculum, not of a Talmud Torah for the children of poor, foreign immigrants, but of a day school attended by children of the middle classes, where secular education was also provided. Secondly, there was no selection of special chapters from the Pentateuch or of the more familiar portions of the Liturgy. The *Chumesh* was read through, in the course of a twelvemonth, from beginning to end. In translating the Prayer-Book, there was no skipping. Scripture history, too, was not studied in short



summaries or 'readers,' but in the Bible itself. And this honest, painstaking, sound and thorough system of education produced Jews who knew Judaism and had a clear conception of what it meant, with the result that many of the past pupils in the old Jews' College School have, in a lay or clerical capacity, rendered useful service to their faith and people.

Why cannot we adopt this syllabus *en bloc* in our denominational schools and religion classes? The answer is clear. The managers would not sanction it. And, if they did, we possibly lack instructors capable of doing justice to such an extensive curriculum. While I yield to none in respect for a hard-working body of men, they will forgive me if I state that, in my experience as an examiner for the last twenty years, I have never yet met anyone who, as a teacher, was worthy to be named in the same breath with the late Mr. Singer. To say that he taught efficiently is a pale and weak understatement. He taught with his heart and soul and might. He taxed his own strength to the utmost, and made demands on the industry and capacity of the boys which no other master would venture to do. For every hour's lesson, at least an hour's, sometimes two hours', home preparation was expected. And, marvellous to relate, the boys responded to his call as they would to that of no one else. What was the secret of his success? The boys' painstaking efforts were amply rewarded. For Singer, as he was affectionately called, also prepared. His teaching was, therefore, alive and forceful. The

translation of the Pentateuch was invariably accompanied by explanatory comments. When, for instance, the Sedrah *Mishpatim* was taken, such leading points as the Jewish doctrine of Bailments, ד"שומרים, was explained, though, of course, Mr. Singer was not so pedantic as to use the lawyer's technical terms. When the Sedrah *Terumah* was read, a rough sketch would be drawn on the blackboard to indicate the relative positions and dimensions of the various parts of the Tabernacle. No place was named in the Scripture lesson which was not pointed out on the large map of Palestine that hung on the wall. And so Biblical history and geography were taught simultaneously.

The sphere of Mr. Singer's activity has two morals—one for the community, the other for its teachers. If parents, especially of the middle and wealthier classes, desire their children to know, not what a professional Rabbi requires to learn, but what every enlightened Jew ought to be familiar with, they must remember that results cannot be obtained without a commensurate expenditure of time and energy. We must give up playing with religious education. There is no royal road to learning. New-fangled methods will not effect miracles of divine illumination. Not one or two, but eight or nine hours a week, that is, one hour and a half a day—the same amount of time as is spent in the public schools in the acquisition of the Classics—ought to be devoted to the study of the various branches of Hebrew and religion. Teachers, on their part, must remember

that if they aspire to be educators in the best sense of the term, if they wish to draw out the best of their pupils, they must bring to the task *their* best. They will only inspire high ideals if they themselves cherish high ideals, if they throw themselves heart and soul into the holiest of all occupations—that of training souls for God. Given sufficient time, and loyal sympathy and hearty co-operation of the parents, the vexed problem of the religious education of the young, now so thorny and beset with difficulties, can and will be solved on the old-fashioned lines, by the methods and enthusiasm which made Mr. Singer so successful a teacher and gained for him the everlasting gratitude of so many pupils.

### III.

Great as a teacher, great as a preacher, he was equally great as a communal worker. He discharged scrupulously the functions appertaining to his office as minister of an important synagogue and pastor of a flock, every member of which idolized him. But he construed his duties in no narrow spirit. The whole of the metropolis was his parish. How frequently he addressed appreciative congregations from this pulpit; ay, and from the pulpits of every synagogue in London and of many in the provinces. How numerous are the institutions, educational and philanthropic, with which he was identified. The Jewish Board of Guardians, the Soup Kitchen, the Orphan Asylum, the Westminster Jews' Free School, Jews' College, the

Provincial Ministers' Fund at once occur to the mind as having enjoyed the benefit of his counsel, guidance and influence.

His many-sided activity shames the slackness and apathy of younger men who, when asked to serve, reply that they are too busy, that their time is already fully occupied—as if Mr. Singer was not also a busy man, and his time was not fully occupied; yet he was never too busy to help a good cause. There was one institution to which he rendered special service, one which does its work perforce quietly, and which ought not, on that account, to be overlooked. I refer to the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women, with its affiliated Rescue Homes. Mr. Singer was, for several years, chairman of the Gentlemen's Committee of this institution, and acted as its delegate at an international conference on the White Slave Traffic. 'What are your people doing to counteract the terrible Traffic, which counts so many Jewesses among its victims?' asked the Bishop of London some eighteen months ago. The reply is: 'We have our Association for the Protection of Girls and Women.' Whether more extended vigilance work on the lines adopted in some provincial towns would be practicable in the metropolis, I cannot tell. But certainly, if you wish to honour Mr. Singer's memory, you must not only maintain our more prominent institutions, but you should also recognize the claims of the Association, which responds to the prophet's call: 'I will seek those

that are lost; and those that have gone astray will I bring back.' <sup>1</sup>

By helping this truly religious, unhappily necessary and indispensable communal work, you will contribute your share towards a worthy perpetuation of the memory of one who spent himself in the service of the community, humanity, and religion.

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 34 : 16.

THE END

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